

SHORT STORIES

No. 759.] Week ending July 18th, 1903. [Price One Penny.



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(A Dramatic Incident from the Story. "THE SISTERS." See inside.)

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Short Stories

No. 759.]

[ONE PENNY.]

Week Ending July 18th, 1903.

THE SISTERS.

BEING THE STORY OF TWO MAIDS AND A MAN, AND THE LATTER'S ROMANTIC CHOICE.

Containing the incident depicted on the cover.

A Journey With a Strange Ending.

"WHAT a glorious old place! I wonder now if, by some extraordinary chance, I am heir to all these broad acres. But no, that would be too much like a bit out of the fairy-tales I used to read when I was a kiddie, where the Poor Young Man always turned out to be a King's Son."

A few faint, far-off notes, the chime of a distant church clock, floated across the great private park that surrounded the author of these observations, and he consulted his watch.

"Half an hour before my time," he remarked; "I suppose it won't do to get there too soon—it might look as if I had rushed off expecting to hear some marvellous piece of good news. Instead of which, I was only—ahem!—curious. All the same I came by an earlier train than the one suggested. But there's no occasion for me to admit that."

Bernard Osborne stepped back out of the sweeping avenue from which he had been viewing—extended under a cloudless summer sky—the lawns and woodlands of a splendid country-seat.

Depositing himself on a pleasantly-rounded hillock that was screened by a coppice of rhododendrons, he lit a cigarette and took a letter from his pocket. It was written on thick, crisp paper and headed "Cunningham and Cunningham, Solicitors," with an address in a historic county-town in the South of England. Its terms were formal, its contents clear and to the point. Bernard Osborne re-read the epistle deliberately.

"I regret to inform you that Sir James Lascelles, known to you as Mr. Lassel, died suddenly some three weeks ago. I was absent on a tour in Spain and did not hear of the sad event in time to return for the last ceremonies. Being the only member of my firm in the confidence of the deceased gentleman, you could not therefore, be informed of his death, or afforded an opportunity of attending the funeral. I hasten, however, at the earliest possible moment, to make this intimation, and to execute certain instructions with which he had favoured me in view of the circumstances which now arise."

"What circumstances?" queried the reader aloud, then continued his thoughtful perusal.

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"If you would be good enough to come down into Hertfordshire, it would much facilitate matters. Your friend and protector, as there is now no reason to withhold from you, was Sir James Lascelles, of Nether Hall, Herts, and Cadogan Square, London. It is at Nether Hall that I should be glad to see you. An excellent train from King's Cross will set you down at Nether Hall station, at 2 p.m., a convenient time for me to await your arrival, and, I trust, a suitable one to yourself. Sir James was a widower, but there is a most capable house-keeper, and you can easily be put up for the night."

The letter was signed, "Yours faithfully, DAVID CUNNINGHAM."

Bernard Osborne studied it reflectively. A lithe, well-built, well-groomed, rather quizzical young Englishman, his handsome, good-tempered features wore an expression graver than was their habit. He folded the letter, put it away, and lay gazing across the lush green levels to where the stately front of the Hall itself showed between the huge trees that here and there shadowed the lawns. The smoke from his cigarette floated dreamily in the still summer air.

Mysterious, reticent, unlovable, the person whom he had known as "Mr. Lassel" had been, from early boyhood, Bernard Osborne's guardian and supporter.

Orphaned at an early age, scarcely remembering his parents, and left entirely without resources to the mercy of harsh and miserly relatives, he had no sooner passed under "Mr. Lassel's" control than he began to receive a liberal education.

Without luxury, yet without poverty, he had been guided, almost sternly, from youth to manhood, according to the instructions of his sphinx-like and seldom-seen patron. And now, while he hesitated upon the threshold of the world where—as "Mr. Lassel" had curtly informed him on more than one occasion—he had to earn his own living, he had learnt of that patron's death.

Unable to mourn him with the sincere grief of the heart, Bernard Osborne was yet conscious of a vague anxiety, of a disconcerting loneliness. What new leaf of his life was he about to turn? His mind was busy with a thousand theories as he lay and puffed at his cigarette.

Suddenly a report, loud yet sharp, disturbed the silence. It was as if a pistol had been discharged at his elbow. He started up and fell back again, caught in the chest by the end of a low-growing bough that, an instant before, had been rustling its leaves within a foot of him. A cry had followed the report—a cry of feminine alarm. Disengaging himself from the fallen bough, he rose, to confront an embarrassed girlish figure.

He lifted his hat, bowing—the face into which he looked was undoubtedly a pretty one.

"I—I hope you are not hurt," he said, "though to be frank, I don't exactly know what happened to either of us."

The intruder's cheeks flushed crimson; she was a girl of about nineteen or twenty, dark-haired and dark-eyed, and simply, almost carelessly dressed in black. Even her limp sun-hat and the ribbon at her throat were black.

"I'm—I'm awfully sorry," she stammered, "but I was in the tree—er—reading—and the branch broke. Have I hurt you?"

Bernard Osborne contemplated her with an emotion new to him; she was so rosily appealing in her innocent confusion.

"Not in the least," he said, "but you have not got off scot-free." And he pointed to one of the small sun-burnt hands that hung at her side. The soft flesh had sustained a nasty tear and blood was welling in a tiny stream from the wound. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, it's nothing," she retorted, groping with her uninjured hand to take a pocket handkerchief from the feminine receptacle in the folds of her skirt. She could not find one. Bernard Osborne drew out an immaculate square of cambric, embroidered with his initials (for, to tell the truth, he was more than a trifle natty in his personal habits), and tore it in half.

"Permit me," he said, "you have cut a small artery and it must be attended to. I did once, I believe, attend a First Aid course." He possessed himself calmly of the injured member and bound it up. Then he stepped back, as if to leave her free to go.

"Thank you so much," she exclaimed; "good—good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," he answered; reluctantly, it must be confessed, "but your book; you were reading." She coloured again.

"Oh, never mind," she said, "it can wait till another time; I have stayed out too long already. Good afternoon, and thank you."

She went off with the graceful haste of a young fawn, but halted and rejoined him.

"The park is not really open to the public," she added; "but pray go wherever you like. And if the keepers speak to you, please mention my name—Miss Hilary Lascelles."

Bernard Osborne bowed once more, regarding her with fresh interest after her utterance of a name not without importance to himself.

"I am obliged to you, Miss Lascelles," he responded, "but you must acquit me even of unconscious trespassing. I am to see Mr.—Mr. Cunningham at the Hall in a few minutes, and being in advance of my appointment, I was making shift to pass the interval with a cigarette."

The person who had introduced herself as Hilary Lascelles started back, scanning him closely.

"An appointment with Mr. Cunningham at the hall to-day?" she repeated.

"but were you not to have come in the dog-cart—it went for you."

The other coloured in his turn. "I—I came down by an earlier train," he said, "and finding no one waiting for me, I left my bag in the booking-office and strolled over."

Hilary Lascelles hesitated, still studying him. Unexpectedly the chime of the distant church sounded again. It roused her and she made an impulsive motion to take her departure, but spun round on her heel.

"You had better go up alone to the Hall," she told him, with an odd coldness. Her manner changed and she pursued, frankly, "We shall meet there. Don't say you saw me out here, will you?"

"Since you do not wish it," he answered gravely, "no."

She thanked him, and moved off a step but retraced it.

"What is your name?" she asked. Osborne was vaguely surprised by the query but replied without comment.

"Bernard Osborne," he said.

Hilary Lascelles knitted her brows critically, she might have been considering whether or not she liked the combination.

"Thank you," she responded; "and now, for the present, good-bye."

Osborne would have detained her, but she forbade him with a gesture and flitted away, and he stayed, to beguile a moment or two by a search for the book she had chosen to peruse in so singular a spot. Failing to find it, he glanced at his watch, and returning to the avenue, gained in due course the entrance of the old and ivied Hall.

A footman received his card and his inquiry for Mr. David Cunningham, and he was ushered without delay into a large apartment, half ante-room, half library. Arms and armour decorated it, and a substantial pedestal desk occupied a corner. From this latter there rose as he stepped into the apartment an undersized, precisely-dressed man, with a lined, clean-shaven face and twinkling blue eyes. They settled shrewdly upon Bernard.

"Mr. Osborne," said their owner, "I am glad to see you. My poor client, Sir James, told me I should like you; I do. Sit down." He motioned to a chair near the desk and resumed his own.

"You have come here, Mr. Osborne," he proceeded, putting the tips of his fingers together, "with, no doubt, a brain very full of natural conjectures. Let me set one portion of them at rest forthwith. You are no blood relation of Sir James and you are not his heir."

Bernard Osborne bent his head assentingly. "Neither was probable," he answered; "the one fact increases my debt to Mr. Lassel—to Sir James—the other, well, he has never deceived me. I understood that I should have to earn my own living and he has generously equipped me for the task."

Mr. David Cunningham nodded approvingly.

"A very proper attitude on your part, Mr. Osborne," he declared; "I have, however, a surprise for you. Sir James told me a while ago, when—when he gave me certain instructions, that he had, he believed, your complete confidence, and that you had not, up to then, contracted any—any sentimental attachment. Is that still the case?"

Osborne hesitated.

"Really, Mr. Cunningham," he said, somewhat proudly, but the lawyer met him with so disarming and good-natured a gaze that he answered the question. "No," he replied, candidly, "I have been too busy. Study and flirtation do not go well together."

"Quite so," remarked the solicitor; "well, in that case, Mr. Osborne, I can



proceed at once to the business on which I have brought you here. And you will please understand that in all I do, I am only following out my late client's explicit instructions. Excuse me for a minute."

He got up solemnly and withdrew. Not one minute but ten passed; and still Bernard Osborne was left alone. Finally the door opened and Mr. David Cunningham reappeared, not unaccompanied. With him were two unmistakably beautiful women—both tall, both young, both elegantly, even exquisitely, dressed.

Osborne looked at them—lost in an instinct of admiration that eclipsed all other emotions. He started. One was fair—dazzlingly, imperially fair, the other dark, dark with the rich soft, sparkling tint of hair and eyes and skin that is between blonde and brunette. And in the dark beauty he had recognised the girl whom he had met and talked with in the park. Nor did he wonder that he had momentarily failed to identify in the splendid creature before him, the hoydenish maiden from whom he had parted so unaccountably.

Hilary Lascelles made no sign of recognition, except that her eyes encountered his own with a certain intelligence. Both women, however, were regarding him steadily, acutely. An air of vague disdain on the features of the fair beauty passed slowly, as a shadow passes, and she smiled—a cold little smile.

The lawyer came forward.

"Mr. Osborne," he said, "allow me to introduce you. Ladies, this is the gentleman of whom I have spoken to you. It only remains for you to learn his name; it is Mr. Bernard Osborne. These ladies, Mr. Osborne, are Sir James' daughters. One is his own by birth, one adopted; as to which is his adopted and which his own child I may not enlighten you; it is a secret Sir James kept even from them. Miss Hilda Lascelles, Mr. Bernard Osborne; Miss Hilary Lascelles, Mr. Bernard Osborne."

As the solicitor completed his lengthy introduction the two sisters paused, side by side, a vision of perfectly contrasted beauty in the afternoon sunlight. But neither spoke. The lawyer coughed.

"One of these young ladies, Mr. Osborne," he proceeded, "is rich, one a beggar. Which is which they do not know; Sir James will tell us that. If you would carry out your more-than-father's wishes, you must, before the will is read, choose one of them for your wife."

Bernard Osborne gasped; the thing seemed incredible. Mr. Cunningham fathomed his thoughts.

"If you refuse to make such a choice," he added, "you are penniless, and it is possible that neither of the ladies may prove to be Sir James' heir. In the event of their agreeing to abide by, and to act on, your decision between them, and of your agreeing to make the necessary choice, I am in a position to guarantee that at least one of them shall be handsomely provided for. The position may be a strange one, but it is my duty to carry out my late client's wishes—all of which are laid down in the will itself."

A spasm of bewilderment fitted over Bernard Osborne. Then his eyes settled on the two lovely women before him. Either of them would make a fitting mate for a better man than he could think himself.

Mr. Cunningham saw that he was yielding, and drew out his watch.

"The ladies have given me the requisite assurance," he said, "and, as the will requests, they have laid aside for the

moment their mourning, and exercised their own unfettered taste in the matter of attire. You have five

minutes to choose your future wife."

Bernard Osborne struggled with a sense of incredulity. Was ever a sane, twentieth-century man confronted with such a problem? But even while he hesitated, his glance was travelling from Hilda the fair to Hilary the dark.

The latter still had a strip of soft cambric about the hand that he had bandaged. She noticed that he was looking at it, and a gleam of gaiety lit up her delicate features and lent them a sweeter, more womanly light than showed in Hilda Lascelles' clearly-chiselled, faultlessly lovely countenance.

He stepped, almost unconsciously, forward, and she, answering the language of his eyes, made half a step in advance.

"Very well," he exclaimed, "I will choose. My sincerest apologies to Miss Hilda, but I have always been so unfortunate as to prefer dark people to fair."

A curious crimson flush stole to the very brows of Hilda Lascelles, but she said nothing. The lawyer drew an envelope from his pocket, and extracted a rustling, legal document. He ran his eye over it, put a finger on a clause, and held it out.

Bernard Osborne saw the indicated phrases. "To my adopted child, Hilary Lascelles, only daughter of my brother Henry Lascelles, one time H.B.M. Consul at Madeira, my love and best wishes for her future happiness in some suitable sphere of usefulness; to my own beloved daughter, Hilda Lascelles, the whole of the properties hereinbefore enumerated."

He had chosen the beggar!

The Way of a Woman.

"It is all very strange! I still feel as if I were dreaming and couldn't wake up."

Hilary Lascelles was sitting in the half light of the great conservatory that opened from the drawing-room of Nether Hall. The gleam of a shaded lamp fell caressingly on her soft brown hair and on the lustrous black silk and chiffon of her dinner gown. She had already returned to her mourning.

Beside her, in the dusk, sat Bernard Osborne, and before her, his hands behind his back and his head on one side, stood Mr. David Cunningham. Through the glass dome of the roof the moon showed a pale blue disc high in the heavens—the evening was far advanced. In the drawing-room without a drowsy footman was securing for the night the fastenings of the French windows.

"You will get used to it very soon," said the lawyer, drily, "almost as soon as Miss Hilda got used to the idea that it was she who was wealthy and not you. And yet when Sir James adopted you on the death of his brother and your mother from fever—it was in Madeira that both Miss Hilda and you were born, and your own mother died within a week of your birth—he conceived the idea of mixing up your identities in order that Miss Hilda should not be spoilt by growing up to know herself an heiress."

Hilary sighed; there was even more in her sigh than in the solicitor's tone of suppressed sarcasm. Mr. David Cunningham surveyed critically the two upon whose quiet *l'ête-à-l'ête* he had intruded with professional coolness.

"Then I am to conclude," he observed, calmly, "that you two young people intend to carry out your rash undertaking?"

"That is as Miss Lascelles chooses," Bernard Osborne told



him: "I have offered her my heart and hand; they are hers till she declines to consider them so."

Mr. Cunningham chuckled. "I like your pluck, my boy," he exclaimed; "Sir James always said you were plucky. Well, we'll see what you think of it in the morning. I shall not blame you if more prudent counsels prevail. Miss Hilary might really do better for herself financially, and you are a clever fellow—you might marry a rich wife in the end if you waited and played your cards carefully. Think it over, both of you. Good night, I'm going to bed."

Bernard Osborne dropped his cigarette and stamped it out as the lawyer lounged off.

"Don't mind him, please," he said to his companion; "I assure you I would not have things a jot different. I—I have never seen anyone I—I like so well as you. Do let me try to teach you to like me a little before you decide that—that it must all be off."

Hilary smiled—a shy, womanly smile.

"You are very generous," she answered, "not to mind a scrap about the money. But I will not let you bind yourself—yet."

She rose, but he detained her—holding the hand he had bandaged only a few hours before.

"Then I am not to be as lucky as I thought I was?" he said; "I am not to have the treasure that Fate promised to drop into my lap? You are trying to break it gently to me—you care for someone else? I should have guessed that—someone you fell in love with at first sight, as I fell in love with you in the park just now."

Hilary's fingers were not quite unresponsive to the ardent clasp that had fastened upon them.

"How foolish," she said, softly, "I have never seen anyone to love. We have lived here very quietly with our governesses and the servants, almost as though we were prisoners of State. How can I help being—being interested in—in someone who is very generous, very warm-hearted, and not—not very bad looking?"

The last half dozen words were delivered from the threshold of the conservatory; she had slipped away from him with graceful ease. A moment more and she was gone.

Her cheeks glowed and her eyes shone as she glided through the big house to gain her own room and shut herself in. He had even dared to pursue her, she guessed, for a slow, masculine footstep passed an instant later down the corridor. Then, not far off, she heard a door shut, and knew that he, too, had retired.

Her pulses quickened and her breath came faster to think that he—handsome, generous, gallant as he was—had openly confessed himself her lover.

The strange events of the last few hours, her discovery as to her own birth, her loss of the right to grieve, as a daughter,

for the stern and not-too-well loved man whom she had believed her father, her sudden change of prospects and position—all were blotted out by the thought that she was beloved.

There are among women rich natures to whom love comes as a sweet and passionate ecstas, lifting them into a new and transfigured world. Such a nature was that of Hilary Lascelles.

She sent away her maid—for was she not now to be poor—and taking the pins out of her hair, began to

comb it leisurely, still thinking. For a long time she sat in a delicious reverie, and then a sound in the room attracted her attention. She looked up—splendid in her sweeping evening gown, white armed, white bosomed, her head crowned with the golden masses of her hair, Hilda Lascelles had come into the apartment.

Hilary rose and the glances of the two women met—although they had dined together, in company with Bernard Osborne and the lawyer, they had not hitherto exchanged, in public or private, a word upon the subject of the will or of the younger man's choice.

There was a certain disdain in Hilda's eyes as she studied her adopted sister—the sloping mirror enabled her to contrast her own imperial beauty, perfectly displayed in the elaborate toilette that was still undisturbed, with the latter's more girlish and appealing prettiness. Yet, in her loose dressing-jacket, with her brown tresses streaming over her shoulders, Hilary was a ripely dainty little figure.

"Well," said Hilda abruptly, "and how do you like your prospects? I suppose this Osborne will become a school-master or a tutor or something—he will have to if he is to be able to marry and keep a wife at such short notice. But you can't really mean to—to encourage him to carry out his idiotic agreement and marry you."

Hilary went on combing her hair. "I think I shall," she responded, with provoking gravity; "he seems quite smitten with me, which is very generous, considering that I am practically a beggar. And then he is clever, handsome, and good-tempered. Husbands like that don't grow on gooseberry bushes."

"Nonsense," said Hilda Lascelles, harshly; "he is too young to marry unless he marries money. You know what Cunningham told us, that the pater thought he ought to go into politics and make a name for himself. To be reduced to the necessity of earning a living for a wife and perhaps a family, by teaching or clerking—it would be ruin to his chance of a career."

She came a step closer and laid a hand on Hilary's arm.

"Hillie," she said, calling her by a rarely-used childish name, "you don't think I would let you starve, do you? Put an end to this foolishness between you and Mr. Osborne and I will settle five hundred a year on you for life. It will be best for you, best for him."

The other ceased from combing her brown locks and lifted her head proudly.

"I don't want the money," she said, "it is yours—you are your father's daughter and it was his money. Luck gave Mr. Osborne to me instead, we met in the park this afternoon, I had gone out to get a glimpse of him, if I could, and climbed into the old lime-tree to see the dog-cart go by. The bough broke and I fell, cutting my hand. He bound it up and we talked a little; he had walked over from an early train and was passing through the park."

A sombre anger was gathering upon Hilda Lascelles' features; Hilary did not heed it.

"Of course, I didn't know who he was, at first," she continued, "but I soon gathered it. I took a fancy to him, and I suppose he did to me. I think I would rather have him than the money. If he really cares for me, in three months I shall let him marry me."

A fierce exclamation broke from Hilda's lips and she thrust her adopted sister from her. Hilary knitted her brows and studied the fair, angry face.

"Hilda," she murmured slowly, "you—you don't mean to say that—that you want him yourself!"

Hilda Lascelles set her white teeth. "How dare you—!" she began, and stopped, someone was knocking loudly on the door.

She drew back and Hilary hastened to open it. Bernard Osborne, partially dressed, his throat bare, his head ruffled, sprang in. With him entered a blast of suffocating purple smoke.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried; "I thought this was the room I saw you go into. Come, there is not a moment to be lost—the place is on fire and blazing like tinder."

A scream answered this intimation and Hilda Lascelles—



wild with an instantaneous frenzy of alarm—darted out into the corridor. A wall of flame barred one end of it. At sight of the roaring blaze she shrieked again and sank down, stupefied by terror.

Bernard Osborne shrugged his shoulders and looked at Hilary. Pale and resolute in her picturesque disarray, she met his glance with quiet self-possession.

"There is a way out through the picture-galleries and the servants' staircase," she said, "and the fire doesn't seem to be in that direction. Shall we try?"

For answer Bernard caught up the collapsed and sobbing Hilda and strode off, Hilary piloting him through the smoke, from one great room to another. He halted abruptly.

"Mr. Cunningham," he said, "his room was near mine, where the fire is the worst—I should have thought of him."

"I will go back," answered Hilary. And she turned quickly. Bernard stayed her.

"You brave little woman!" he said, "but you couldn't fight the smoke. I must go."

He put his lips to Hilda's ear. "Miss Lascelles," he told her, "if you cannot control yourself you will be left to your fate. The way out lies straight ahead."

Setting her down remorselessly, he allowed Hilary to support her, and then darted into the smoke. Hilda gave a scream and fled—through the long gallery towards the stair beyond. But Hilary lingered, retreating little by little from the advancing billows of smoke.

At length a figure emerged staggeringly from them, a figure bearing a burden. It was Bernard Osborne and in his arms he carried the unconscious form of Mr. David Cunningham. Blinded, half-suffocated, the younger man reeled this way and that.

Hilary sprang to him with a cry and, seizing his arm, guided him down the gallery. He clung dauntlessly to his burden and Hilda saw that the lawyer was clad in dressing-gown and slippers and that one of his hands clutched mechanically a small brown bag.

Half an hour later, the little lawyer, assiduously tended on the lawn outside the half-consumed house, none of whose inhabitants had had a narrower escape than himself, was able to sit up and inquire the whereabouts of his bag. When it was put into his hand he wrinkled his singed eyebrows and chuckled. Still more did he chuckle when he learnt of his rescue by Bernard Osborne from the corridor into which, wrapped in his dressing-gown and carrying his bag, he had managed to struggle.

Then, in the lurid light of the blazing house, he opened the bag, to draw out a long blue envelope and wave it.

"If—if this had been burnt along with me!" he exclaimed; "Osborne, my boy, you have done better than you know—much, much better."

And Bernard Osborne had, though it was not until some little while after that he became acquainted with the real purport of the solicitor's enthusiastic observation.

The blue envelope, however, contained a sealed document, marked "To be opened Three Months After My Death." It was the latest and genuine will of Sir James Lascelles, a will by which his fortune was equitably divided. The principal portion of his great wealth went in equal shares to his daughter Hilda and his adopted child Hilary, the remainder sufficed to provide for a handsome bequest to Bernard Osborne and for legacies to old friends and servants.

"The other will," said David Cunningham, in the course of his final explanation, "was practically a dummy. Which-ever girl you had chosen, I was in a position to prove her a beggar."

"But—but why?" demanded Osborne, bewildered.

The lawyer smiled.

"You were the son of an old college friend of Sir James," Bernard was told. "He was a strange man, Sir James, and at first he rather resented becoming responsible for your education and upbringing. But he grew greatly to like you, and what is more, to trust and admire you. So much so, that he coveted you as a husband for one of his girls."

"But—but why not have introduced us to one another in a

—a less unconventional way and during his life?" queried Bernard.

"He planned to do so," replied David Cunningham, "but the girls were in the schoolroom and you very properly occupied with your education. If he died prematurely this fantastic comedy was to take the place of the introduction he meditated. He wished to make sure of your disinterestedness, you see."

"There is a codicil even to this will, providing that the bequest to you may be cancelled at my option and devoted to charitable purposes. The discretion was to be exercised if you should act disingenuously towards the lady of your choice on being made to believe that she was penniless."

It only remains to add that between Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Osborne and the latter's adopted sister, there is a gulf which the years tend rather to widen than to bridge.

R. Norman Silver.



"Your cook is a very handsome girl." "She is. She mashes the potatoes by smiling at them."

SHE: "Are you sure that it was a year ago to-day that we became engaged, dear?" He: "Yes; I looked it up in my cheque-book this morning."

SHE (an ardent admirer): "I quite agree with you, Mr. Maunder, Drivelle's poems are great rubbish. Why, I'm sure you could turn out that sort of thing by the yard!"

"DODGER is going to have a law passed compelling women to wear their old hats at the theatre." "What good will that do?" "Why, then they will always be willing to take them off."

DOBSON: "Do you believe in second sight?" Hobson: "No, but my wife does. When I go shopping with her she always says to the salesman: 'I'll come in and look at these again.'"

NURSE: "Sure, ma'am, the twins have been making a fuss all day, ma'am." Mrs. Olive Branch: "What about?" Nurse: "It's because they can't have a birthday a-piece, like the Smith children next door. They think they have been cheated."

"JOHN, Charles, William," cried the boys' mother, "where are those apples I left here?" "In our midst," returned the boys, and when the doctor called that night the mother knew that her little darlings had spoken truthfully as well as with a grammatical accuracy that is not universal.

"Those flannel shirts I bought here last month——" he began. "I remember it," said the clerk. "It was a great bargain. Do you find them warm enough?" "They were warm enough when I first put them on, but I didn't think to inquire about them this morning." "Inquire about them?" "Yes. Ever since they were washed the baby has been wearing them. Now, if you have anything that isn't quite so much of a bargain, and is a little more likely to remain my size, I'd like to see it."



A MATTER OF SPELLING.

The Romance of a Name and an Accident.

It was a summer afternoon in the orchard. The conversation had died down, but I brought it to momentary life with a somewhat belated remark on the subject which had just been under discussion.

"For my own part," I said lazily, lounging on the grass, "I think most names are good enough, but at least preserve me from Obadiah! I knew a man once who was actually christened Obadiah Octavius! And Jemima!—I think Jemima is an atrocity, if ever there was one. Now Dorothy, Dorothea, Theodora, the gift of God, that's the best woman's name I know of."

I spoke with meaning for I had a special reason for thinking so, and I glanced stealthily at pretty Dolly Tracy who was sitting in a low deck chair not far from me, but still a good deal farther off than I could have found it in my heart to wish. But presently when the others scattered themselves a bit I meant to change all that.

As I looked at her now I gathered courage from her bearing; her cheeks seemed to have taken on a pink tinge and she lifted her eyes momentarily to mine, removing them hastily with a reproachful, almost frightened glance which I was at a loss to understand.

The pink colour deepened to red, but as she did not look up again I continued in my selfishness to gaze at her.

Whether she felt my scrutiny and the love that provoked it or not I do not know, but all at once the blush seemed to have become scarlet, distressful, and even to my bewildered fancy a tear trembled on her eyelids, a dewdrop that glistened for a second in the sun and was gone the next as she sprang from her seat and cried:

"Come, the court is in shadow now, who'll have a set of tennis?"

My airy, fairy castles all came tumbling to the ground for the moment, but I was quite willing.

"I'll help you play against Miss Neville and Ted!" I said eagerly.

"No, thank you," she replied coolly, "I don't think we should be at all evenly matched that way."

I felt hurt. Miss Neville and Dolly played about an equally good game. I wondered if she meant to insinuate that I—that Ted—

"All right," I said huffily, "you girls can play us. Come on, Ted."

Ted is my younger brother and I have always considered him extremely lacking in respect for me, but on occasion he can surpass even himself. This was one.

"Rot!" he said loudly, "and have you poaching all my balls! Not if I know it!"

And to cap this rude speech he appropriated Miss Tracy to himself as his partner by ostentatiously turning to her and asking: "Shall we toss for courts or let them toss?"

I accepted the situation with sufficient though not too much

dignity, and tried to recover my temper somewhat by slashing all my balls hard and fast at my young brother.

Naturally, I took care they should all go wide of Dolly, and my partner and I were getting an easy victory and I was beginning to feel somewhat better, when Dolly, who had come up to the net for balls, cried out peevishly:

"I haven't got a single stroke in up till now and it's all your fault, Mr. Blake. I consider it most ungentlemanly to slash balls at a lady!"

I apologised profusely and tried to explain that it was just

what I had been carefully avoiding doing. It was her serve now, and anxious to please her I was at great pains to lob her a ball that the veriest tyro could scarcely have failed to return. I suppose she had done me the injustice to prepare for a slasher and could not change her mode of defence in time for she only just let her racquet touch it and the ball fell into the net.

I was hopelessly in her black books after that, and the game drew to a victorious close for us but a melancholy one to me.

I wandered away feeling terribly out of sorts. I had meant to put my fate to the test that afternoon, but now I felt suddenly robbed alike of courage and confidence. Dolly could not care for me else she would never have acted like that just when my heart had begun to beat high with hope.

I came moodily back and recrossed the tennis-ground. Oh! this was too bad! I might get over her flirting with young Ted—he was only a boy, but when it came to coquetting with that ass Saunderson it was more than flesh and blood and love and jealousy could stand.

At the side of the tennis-court, under a luxuriantly flowering laburnum tree, had been placed two garden-chairs, and ensconced thereon, their two heads close together under the shade of a huge white sun umbrella, I descried Dolly and Arthur Saunderson.

My blood boiled.

How dared he? that was what I wanted to know! And how could she, my pretty, dainty Dolly, endure to have a clown of a fellow like that dancing attendance on her! Why, he couldn't, even shield her from the sun without putting her to twice that amount of inconvenience by crowding her and mangling her delicate muslin dress. And as for elbow-room, he evidently was under the impression she didn't need any.

"I'll teach him manners!" I thought grimly.

Dolly looked over at me just as the thought crossed my mind, but I wasn't going to let her see that I cared, so I shouted to Ted, who was sitting on the drawing-room steps whistling.

"Come on, Ted, I'll play you singles."

Ted accepted the challenge with alacrity and came and picked up his racquet, and we started our game in earnest. Ted is a close match for me at the best of times, still, it's not often that I can't beat him, but to-day he seemed in unusually good form, and my own play was scarcely as steady as usual.

I was annoyed when the games stood at three all, especially with Dolly looking on. I have a bad temper, and everyone knows I am a bad loser, so that it was not surprising if I should determine to carry all before me. I did so.

Ted's balls were here, there, and everywhere about the court, and after frantically returning a difficult stroke the impetus of my desperate effort was such that it carried me on and before I could stop myself I had collided with Saunderson's garden-chair, and its occupant, the white umbrella and I were among the *débris*.

It was not my business to know exactly what happened after that, but when I came to I was lying on the sofa in the library; the blinds had been drawn down and someone said,

"He'll do now." There seemed to be a great crowd of people, and I said I felt all right, and presently they went away and left me with a splitting headache which kept me company for my sins.

When I put my hand to my head I found it was all bound up and there was a great bump on one side, which I said to myself must be the bump of jealousy, and I only hoped it wasn't as large as it felt.

"But, by George!" I muttered out loud, "I was jealous!" "Please do you want anything?" asked a small voice which seemed to come out of the corner of the room.

I tried to peep out from under my bandages but I could distinguish nothing. However, I recognised the voice and put a plain question:

"Is that you?" I asked.

"Yes, it is," answered the voice quite naturally, but with a little tremble.

"Then I want you," I said promptly.

A small, timid figure crept up to me and said:

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes," I said, "but you won't do it, I know," I added, in a tone of fixed conviction.

"How do you know?" said the voice indignantly. "Of course I will! Try me!"

I couldn't see her for the bandages and the bump of jealousy; still, but for them I'm sure I should never have had the courage; as it was I said in audible tones:

"You might kiss me."

Silence.

"You might kiss me," I ventured, in a weak murmur this time.

Dead silence.

"I shouldn't have thought," I said, more weakly still, "that you would refuse a dying man's request."

I own that was my last card, but still I never thought it was going to be quite such a trump as it proved.

Dolly flung herself on her knees beside me and clasped me round the neck in a manner one might have thought certainly calculated to hasten the demise of a man with but a few more breaths left to draw, but which on the contrary had a singularly pleasing and revivifying effect on a man of my naturally robust constitution; so much so, indeed, that in a few seconds I was able to sit up and return with considerable vigour the caresses she had hitherto lavished on me.

"You're not going to die!" sobbed Dolly, "don't, don't say such dreadful things!"

"Do you love me?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, yes—you know I do. And if you had died I should have felt a murderess and Mr. Saunderson would have been one because he put the chairs there; he insisted on putting them there, and now he is covered with bruises and can scarcely walk, and his hands are scratched all over."

"I feel better," I said, ignoring the latter part of her speech. "I think I shall recover—with care. I shall require all your care," I said, sinking back as the memory of the lump on my head and her concluding words occurred to me together.

"Oh, I shall be your most devoted nurse," she said tenderly, as tenderly as even I could wish.

"My sweet Dorothy!" I said.

"But that is not my name," she said, pouting, "and you don't like my name. You said hateful things about it."

"The sweetest name in the world!" I cried enthusiastically.

"But my real name is *Jemima*," she said, with crimson cheeks, "and Dolly is only a pet name. I quite thought you knew."

And then I suddenly understood everything, but even if my head ached with my folly, what did it matter, my heart was light now.

"It's only a matter of spelling," I declared fondly. "Whatever your name, it would always read *Dorothea* to me."

Ellice Beere.



THE Buried Stations Competition is in process of checking and the result will be published in this paper at the earliest possible moment.

I CAN thoroughly recommend the Juggled Letters Competition as being one of the most fascinating that has ever been given to readers of any paper. If you once start trying to put the letters in their proper order you will not want to give up until you have arrived at the best solution obtainable. The competition will be complete in twelve lists, the seventh of which will be found on page 79.

The conditions are perfectly clear, and everyone should be able to understand them. No replies to queries will be given either personally or through the post, but if a point of sufficient general interest is raised it will be dealt with in this column.

AGAIN this week I am offering a gold-plated pencil-case to the reader who sends in the list of stories in this number written in the order of merit in which they are regarded by the majority of readers. I am anxious to find out the kind of stories you prefer, so that I may be able to give you what you like best. Write your list on the back of a post-card, together with your name and address, then send it to PREFERENCE No. 2, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, July 21st.

I HAVE just been in the country for a few days, away from the heat and bustle of London, and now that I have returned can realise to the full what life must be to those who are never able to get away at all, either from want of time, or, what is worse, from poverty.

Unfortunately, the number of those included in the latter category is very large, and a great proportion of them are children. From want of fresh air many lives have been lost, and growth has been stunted. How can a child be expected to attain its normal physical development when it is always cooped up in a town? Let those who are placed in easy—or comparatively easy—circumstances do what they can to lighten the burden of their less happily and fortunately situated fellow creatures.

To provide a day's pleasure in the country for one child costs only ninepence—that is the sum for which the FRESH AIR FUND can do it—and this includes a good supply of wholesome food. Such a cheap charity deserves support, doesn't it? So won't you help it along?

Send your ninepence—or more if you can afford it—to the Hon. Secretary, FRESH AIR FUND, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Whatever your contribution it will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. Collecting forms can be had on application.

Your Editor.



A Weir Mitchell Victim.

Telling of the Trick to Bring
Together Two Young Hearts.

"DICKIE," said Maisie, with a twinkle in her merry blue eyes, "I've got a new idea!"

Handsome Dick Fenning looked at her appreciatively.

"Something novel or you, Maisie," he answered good-humouredly. "I thought your feminine propensities did not go much beyond new hats."

"You needn't be sarcastic," she replied scornfully. "You're not overburdened with ideas yourself, you know, or you would have found ways and means for our marriage. You needn't be jealous because I've gone one better than you!"

"About our marriage, is it?" asked Dick, roused to interest and ignoring Maisie's last home thrust. "So you think you have a plan for our mutual welfare. Go ahead, little girl, and if it's feasible, I'm with you."

"Papa, as you know, Dick, won't consent to our marriage until your prospects are brighter. He refuses to go away unless I accompany him, in case we—"

"Bolt?" suggested Dick, by way of helping her on.

"Er—er—yes," agreed Maisie; "thank you, Dick, that's just it. And—and," she continued, with the suspicion of tears in the blue eyes, "he said to me this morning that he thought it time the engagement of his daughter to—a man not rich enough to marry should be—be—"

"Broken off?" hinted Dick kindly.

"Yes, dear, that was it; until he—the man you know— you, Dick—until your position was better financially."

"Oh!" gasped Fenning, "he said that, did he?" and he gave vent to a long whistle; "which means that as my prospects are at present nil, he would insist on our engagement being postponed for an indefinite period!" said Dick woefully.

"My poor boy!" sighed Maisie, "that's just what he does mean. He also said that when he goes away for the summer, he will exercise care that you don't know our whereabouts."

Dick replied by a woefully woebegone expression.

"What we have to do, Dickie, is to get him to some resort where you can stay without his knowledge."

Fenning nodded. "Secret meetings, hair-breadth escapes from the ogre's discovery, bribing the servants, and all that sort of thing!" he murmured.

"Nothing of the sort!" replied Maisie, with a scornful toss of her pretty head. "I've got an idea by which you and I can be in the same house, Dickie—house!" she repeated with emphasis, "and he shall never know."

"Shall never know?" repeated Fenning incredulously. "Impossible! It can't be done, Maisie!"

"You dear, silly old thing!" cried Maisie, kissing him (which necessitated a longer pause than she had intended), "it can be done, shall be done, and we are going to do it! Now for the plan!" said Maisie, looking sweetly fascinating in her excitement. "Ever since papa had a spill in his motor-car he has not felt quite the thing."

Dick looked mischievously at Maisie, and tapped his head

solemnly three times. "Is that it?"

"Yes," cried Maisie, laughing. "It buzzes. His dear old head swims and buzzes sometimes."

"Always, I think!" chimed in Dick under his breath.

"Wicked boy!" laughed Maisie.

"Go on!" said Dick.

"Doctor Porter—papa's doctor, you know, and a great friend of ours—he'd do anything for me, Dickie—says he wants two months' perfect rest

and quiet, and the only way to obtain the real thing is by the Weir Mitchell process, which means complete rest and isolation for six weeks at least."

"I don't see how that's going to help us. We can't go in for it, and, if we did, couldn't see each other!"

"Have patience, sir, and you will see," put in Maisie, with the calm of exasperation. "Dr. Porter knows of a large hydro in the north where the Weir Mitchell process is carried on to perfection."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fenning, with a nod of approval, beginning to realise the scheme.

"What I have to do," went on Maisie, "is to get Dr. Porter to send papa to this hydro with me. When papa is safely isolated I shall wire for you to come down. Now, you silly old darling, do you see?" cried Maisie in ecstasies.

For expressive reply Dick placed Maisie's head in the neighbourhood of his shoulder.

"But are you sure of the rules of this rest cure?" he asked, after a few minutes.

"Yes, dear, quite. The patient remains in bed for at least six weeks, living the life of a slightly animated snail, merely eating, sleeping, and being massaged three or four times a day; allowed to see no one except by the doctor's permission, and may not even read. The patient is entirely cut off from the world, as it were. Dickie, you can be down the whole time nearly and papa will never know!"

"It's splendid!" agreed Dick enthusiastically. "And, by Jove!" he cried, "I'll work at my books like blazes and see if I can't persuade Aunt Jemima to come down. She wants a change, and the water cure would do her worlds of good. I'll show her no end of attention and try to get into her favour again. She's a good old sort, but has never forgiven me shooting her favourite cat and having to pay for all those windows I broke at college. She told me she altered her will as I was a scapegrace, and all sorts of things. And, Maisie, she—she can chaperon you and need know nothing of your father's orders about me—eh?"

"Indeed," said the girl, "it's a capital plan; and, Dick?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Mum's the word!"

"Rather!"

"In a week I shall have papa at the hydro, and I think it would be better if—"

"I avoided you for the present?" asked Dick.

"Yes, dear, if you don't mind?"

"Of course I mind, but I'll do it."

"Go into the country so that I can tell papa you've gone away!"

"Maisie, you're a born schemer!" replied Dick, sweeping her into his arms.

Mr. Benjamin Banks, Maisie's father, offered many excuses why he should not try the Weir Mitchell cure, but all objections were gradually overruled by the persuasions of his daughter, for whom he had a very soft spot in his tender old heart.

As he proceeded to put as many obstacles in the way as he could, Maisie very promptly and carefully pulled them down, pointing out why there was every reason that he should at least give the process a trial. She was backed by their friend

Dr. Porter, who, whether suspecting trickery or not, heartily supported Maisie, and emphatically agreed that it would effect a speedy and certain cure.

Such visions of health and strength did their joint persuasions conjure up that in the end the old gentleman stoutly denied ever having resented the idea, and finally declared that nothing on earth would prevent his going at the earliest possible moment.

"At any rate," he said to Maisie, "that good-for-nothing boy, Dick, won't dare follow us. It wouldn't do at all for you to be at the hydro with him there, no chaperon, and I shut up in my bedroom for six weeks. You needn't tell him where we're going. Where is he—he's not been here this last few days?"

"Gone into the country, papa dear."

"Ah! has he? He'll prove himself a sensible young man if he stays there. Why, my dear child, it's a folly for you to be engaged to a penniless pauper with no prospects, and not, I think," he added severely, "strong tendencies for work."

"Oh, papa, he's not penniless!" broke out Maisie; "he's got £200 a year, and writes awfully clever books!"

"Two hundred fiddlesticks! Heaps of people write books, but they can't sell 'em, child!" contemptuously replied the retired merchant.

Mr. Banks had been a steady business man all his life, and scorned the idea of money-making by anything but legitimate business. With him, artists and authors were beyond the pale.

"Who ever knew one who made any money?" he asked.

He fondly anticipated a good marriage for his pretty daughter—good, that is, from his and the world's point of view.

"You can't marry on two hundred a year, Maisie," he said, patting her cheek. "No, you must give up all thoughts of Mr. Fenning."

"Perhaps," he added to himself, "this absurd infatuation will dwindle if they don't see each other for a couple of months."

At this thought he was more than ever determined to get away, and a few days later saw them comfortably installed at a handsome and well-appointed hydro fitted with every appliance and bath known and unknown to the scientific world.

For three days Mr. Banks looked about him and was initiated into the mysteries of hydropathy, and found it healthful and diverting. Then, having consulted the doctor, commenced the rest cure. His daughter was permitted to visit him three times a week, each visit to last only a quarter of an hour.

The time was passed in sleeping, eating (every two hours), and being massaged. Reading was forbidden. His life therefore, did not promise to be very active for the next six weeks. But he resigned himself to his fate, bid a tender farewell to Maisie, and temporarily retired from the world.

Directly her father was confined to his room, from which there did not appear to be any possible chance of escape, owing to the tender solicitude of a most assiduous attendant, Maisie dispatched the following wire to Dick:

"Come at once. Father commenced.—MAISIE."

The following reply came a few hours later:

"Aunt and I with you 8.30 to-day.—DICK."

Maisie discreetly kept out of the way when they came, and Dick was careful to see that his aunt notified their arrival in the visitors' book by writing "Miss Mitchin and nephew."

While his aunt went up to her room, Dick went in search of Maisie, and, after wandering in and out of the numerous public rooms and up and down the corridors, eventually arrived at the Winter Gardens. Seated in a chair under a palm he saw a vision of white feminine daintiness, apparently deeply absorbed in reading. He stepped quietly up to her.

"I've come, Maisie," he whispered.

"Dick!" she cried, "oh, Dick—isn't it splendid?"

There were people about, which Dick resented.

"My name is not in the visitors' book, Maisie, simply 'Miss Mitchin and Nephew.'"

"Dick, you're smarter than I gave you credit for. And how is your aunt?"

"Awfully decent and quite glad to come."

"Papa is perfectly secure. Not allowed out of bed. And cannot possibly know of anything that goes on. Must live the life of a dormouse for the next six weeks."

Half an hour later Maisie and Dick were chatting to Miss Mitchin. She was a dear old soul, with happiness beaming through her spectacles, but terribly conventional, and lived in constant terror of Dick disgracing himself. She was not aware that Mr. Banks would have been furious had he known of Dick's arrival, for she had not been told of the threatened breaking off of the engagement. She was fond of Maisie and liked to see the young people happy and enjoying themselves.

"And so your father has gone in for Weir Mitchell?" she asked Maisie.

"Yes, the doctor said it would be the best thing."

"Perhaps," said the old lady innocently, "this incorrigible Dick"—and she tried to look severe—"will go and see him sometimes."

"He is not permitted to receive visitors," put in Maisie.

"What a pity! Give him my kind regards, my dear, and wish him a complete recovery from me. I'll perhaps write him an occasional note."

"I wouldn't do that," urged Maisie, looking fixed bayonets at Dick.

"It will upset him," chimed in blundering Dick.

"And pray, Richard, why should a note from me upset him?" asked his aunt.

"Well, you see," said Maisie, "he's not allowed to have any letters or notes. He is not supposed even to read."

As the conversation was drifting into dangerous channels, Maisie diplomatically turned it into smoother waters, and the trio retired to rest in a very merry mood.

Dick set himself to study his aunt, and by his devoted attention gradually gained favour.

The days passed pleasantly enough with tennis, drives, picnics, and walking, so Dick and Maisie spent a great deal of time together. Their plan had succeeded beyond expectations. Maisie paid her father periodical visits, but never delivered Miss Mitchin's message.

After three weeks' isolation Mr. Banks was heartily tired of it. He noticed that his daughter looked particularly happy. He said nothing, but thought all the more. He swore at his attendant, hydropathy, and everything connected with it.

"Another three weeks," he gasped one day to Maisie; "but I'll see it out if it kills me," he heroically declared.

"On the contrary," said Maisie, "three weeks more will give you a new lease of life."

Meantime Miss Mitchin had quite made up her mind to alter her will again in favour of Dick, and make him an allowance. She was even so indiscreet as to mention this to Maisie, who was not slow in imparting it to Dick.

A few days after Mr. Banks had stoutly declared his intentions of seeing it out, Miss Mitchin, Maisie, and Dick were sitting in the summer-house on the bowling-green. Suddenly a well-known voice broke



upon their ears—a voice that made Dick jump, and Maisie pale.

"It was no use," said the voice; "I could stand it no longer. I'm sick of it. Eat, sleep, eat, sleep, day after day, with my limbs sore with the constant thumping of my masseur. No books, no society, no nothing."

"But, my dear sir, pray consider the doctor," came another voice. "Do get back to your room, pray, Mr. Banks."

"The doctor can go to—to where he likes, and I don't want ever to see my bedroom again."

The speakers were getting nearer. Maisie and Dick knew they were caught like rats in a trap. In another moment Mr. Banks and his attendant had turned the corner and were on them.

For a moment Mr. Banks paused and stood stock still, glaring at them. His face went alternately red and purple. At length he stumped up to them in a towering rage.

"And pray," he said, going up to Dick, "what in thunder is the meaning of this, sir?"

"Meaning of it, sir?" repeated Dick foolishly.

"Yes, sir, meaning of it? I will repeat it fifty times if you like."

Miss Mitchin dropped her work and was simply speechless.

"How long have you been in the Hydro, Mr. Fenning?"

"Nearly three weeks, sir," answered Dick.

"How—how dare you, sir," roared Mr. Banks, glancing at Dick and Maisie. "How dare you come down here and take advantage of my isolation?"

"I believe, sir," answered Dick, with a twinkle in his eye which he could not suppress, "there is nothing to prevent my visiting a health resort with my aunt?"

"Miss Mitchin," went on Mr. Banks, fuming. "Madam, allow me to inform you that your nephew is a daring young scapegrace—and—and an impostor. Miss Mitchin, is it possible that you were also in the conspiracy—conspiracy, madam?"

Miss Mitchin's face was a study in consternation and mystification.

"Ah, what an old fool I have been. Of course, I see it all now. Your scapegrace of a nephew planned that I should come down here for the rest cure, and put Maisie up to the trick so that he could be here without my knowledge."

Again Mr. Banks looked very black at them.

Suddenly it flashed across the dear, prim old woman what it

all meant. She glanced at Dick and Maisie and smiled—actually smiled.

"Come here, sir," she said to her nephew as severely as she could.

Dick came up to her.

"Is this true, you—you bad fellow?" she asked. "Was it a scheme of yours?"

"It was my idea," answered Dick, hoping he would be forgiven the lie, and he heard Maisie give a little gasp.

"Mr. Banks, I assure you that I am innocent of any conspiracy, conspiracy," she reiterated, "as a babe unborn. What you imply has fallen upon me like a thunderclap. As yet I am rather in the dark, but have an inkling of how matters stand. Perhaps one day I shall be enlightened."

Mr. Banks glared harder than ever.

"Well—well," put in the old lady after a pause; "young people will be young people. Love knows no prison bars and—and— Mr. Banks, you and I were young once and not impeccable."

Mr. Banks grunted.

"Dick is a young scamp, but I believe"—and she glanced tenderly at him—"he is very fond of Maisie."

Dick's look at Maisie conveyed volumes.

"And pray, what is he going to marry on?" asked Mr. Banks.

"Perhaps something can be done," answered Miss Mitchin; "we'll see."

"Madam," said the old man, "I've been tricked and humbugged, but I had my suspicions, so I resolved to get up and see what was going on. We—we'll discuss the matter in full later in the day—or, that is, if I don't return to my Weir Mitchell, and thumping and sleeping, and eating and—"

Try as she would Maisie could not keep back a laugh which was so infectious that the summer-house was soon ringing with merry peals. The humour of the situation was irresistible.

"Well," said Mr. Banks presently, as sternly as he could, addressing Miss Mitchin, "and pray how are we going to deal with these young people?"

"Deal with them?" she asked with a smile. "I should suggest that the first thing we do is to go and buy them a wedding present."

And they went.

Dagney Major.



GEORGE CHESTER'S MISTAKE.

And How It Was Found Out.

"CHARITY, kind sir! My poor children are starving!" The speaker was a thinly-clad woman, who

shivered in the wintry blast, for it was December, and the keen, frosty air penetrated even the warm garments of the rich. The gentleman addressed was a man of perhaps thirty-five, a rich and prosperous man, who hoped soon to become still more rich and prosperous through an alliance with the fair girl at his side.

with joy, for she had hoped for but sixpence at the most, and half a sovereign seemed, to her, positive wealth.

"Heaven bless your generous heart!" she exclaimed, with heartfelt gratitude.

"Thank you," said George Chester graciously.

Edith Mortimer rewarded him with a beaming smile.

"I am glad you gave the poor creature so much," she said. "I like generosity. I don't think I could esteem or respect a mean man."

"We think alike on that point, my darling," said Chester. "I never can refuse to give, even if I suspect the object may be unworthy. It makes me happy to make others happy."

Another beaming glance from Edith.

"Poor woman!" said Edith Mortimer compassionately. "I have left my purse at home. George, I am sure you will help her."

"Of course I will, my darling. Here, poor woman, take that, and may it do you good!"

As he spoke he drew from his pocket half a sovereign, and put it into the extended hand of the applicant. The poor woman's heart bounded

"I love you all the better for that, dear George," she said, in a low voice.

"On the whole," thought Chester, "my half sovereign is a good investment, though I can't help grudging it to the beggar. When Edith becomes Mrs. Chester, and I get hold of her twenty thousand pounds, she shan't give many half sovereigns to beggars. For the present, it's policy to be generous."

Of course Edith could not read the thoughts of the man at her side. She believed him to be a genuine philanthropist, while, in reality, he was a mean, selfish, hard-hearted man, yet with tact enough to overcome these traits for the sake of making a favourable impression upon the heart of the heiress.

Edith Mortimer was an orphan, and the absolute mistress of twenty thousand pounds; no small fortune for a girl of nineteen. But her fortune was by no means her chief attraction. She was beautiful, sweet-tempered, accomplished, and her heart was animated by the most generous charity. She had a regular list of pensioners, and would have found it impossible to refuse an applicant who was in need.

As Edith said, she would have found it impossible to respect or esteem a mean man. Thus far, George Chester had succeeded in concealing his real character from her, but the time was coming when it would be revealed. Whenever he was with her he gave liberally to any who asked for charity, but at his business he would have repulsed them with hard and bitter words. He kept a large clothing shop in one of the principal streets in Verchester, but Edith, who lived some little distance outside the city limits, had never been there and knew absolutely nothing of him in his business relations.

Of course there were many who courted the favour of the young and beautiful heiress, but there was only one who came near being the rival of the successful suitor. This was Doctor Goodwin, a young physician, who had recently established himself in the city, and was having a hard struggle to get into a lucrative practice, being poor and without influential friends. But he was essentially noble, of good figure, with a frank, open face, and unusually able and intelligent. Success with him was only a matter of time.

When he saw the rich trader preferred to him, he quietly withdrew, disappointed, but too honourable to attempt to reverse Edith's decision, now that it appeared to be made.

It was made, and the wedding-day was about to be fixed, when something occurred which quite changed the position of affairs.

Edith was walking in Verchester one day when her attention was attracted to a girl of about her own age who was sitting on one of the stone seats placed there for the use of tired pedestrians. The girl was plainly dressed, and in her face and attitude was such an air of despondency, that Edith, whose heart was full of compassion for the wretched, felt herself constrained to stop and speak to her.

"Are you not well?" she asked, in a low, sympathetic voice.

The girl, who was very thinly and poorly clad, looked up.

"Yes," she answered, "I am well."

"But you are sad. You have met with some misfortune, have you not?"

"Yes," answered the girl despondently.

"Will you tell me what it is? Perhaps it is something which I can remedy. Don't think me inquisitive, but I really want to help you, if you will let me."

The girl answered gratefully:

"Thank you for your kindness. It does me good, for I stand in need of kind words."

"Tell me, then, your trouble," and Edith, in her seal-skin jacket, sat down beside the plainly dressed girl.

"My mother and I live together," explained the girl. "We are very poor, and mother is an invalid, unable to do much. We have nothing to live upon except what I can earn by the needle."

"That must be very little."

"Yes, it is very little; but I have been cheated out of that little. It is terrible."

"Tell me about it. Is it possible that anyone could be

so mean as to cheat you out of the little you earn in that hard way?"

"I will tell you how it happened. A week since, I got a bundle of waistcoats to make for a large house. The pay was very small. By working early and late I could earn about a shilling a day."

"Is it possible? I never heard of such oppression," said Edith indignantly.

"Well, I finished the half-dozen, and this morning took them round to the shop. Instead of paying the money, the proprietor, a rich man, said roughly that they were not well done, and he could only pay ninepence apiece for them. If I would take that he would give me more work. I knew it was all a pretence to cheat me out of threepence on each waistcoat, for I am an experienced hand in that line, and these were made as well as usual."

"And did you take the money?" asked Edith.

"What could I do? There was no money to buy our dinner. I had to take it, but I know that it is impossible for us to get along on that paltry sum. I see nothing for us but starvation."

"Cheer up! I am rich! I will help you!" said the heiress. "But tell me the name of this mean wretch who cheated you."

"It is George Chester."

"Who?" exclaimed Edith, startled and surprised.

"George Chester. I hear he is engaged to a wealthy heiress, but I don't think such a man can prosper."

"I must look into this," said Edith quickly, her face flushed. "It is more important to me than you know. Come to my house."

The girl accompanied her home, and presently the heiress, who had changed garments with the poor girl for a brief space, emerged into the street and made her way to the shop of George Chester. She was so muffled up that her face could not be seen.

"What do you want?" asked a salesman roughly.

"To see Mr. Chester," answered Edith, in a low voice.

"He is busy. He can't see a girl like you."

"I have something important to say to him."

George Chester, on being told this, came forward.

"Well, girl, what do you want of me?" he asked rudely.

"You gave me only ninepence for some waistcoats I brought here this morning," said Edith, in an assumed voice.

"What of that? They were badly made."

"I need the money for my mother. I worked hard, and I am sure the waistcoats were well made."

"Look here! I can't be troubled with you," said Chester roughly. "I gave you all the work was worth."

"My mother will starve."

"Let her starve then. It's no business of mine."

This was too much for Edith, whose indignation was intense.

She uncloaked herself, revealing to George Chester a face that terrified him, so full was it of withering scorn.

"I am glad I have found you out, Mr. Chester," said Edith.

"Fortunately, it is not too late," and she turned haughtily and swept out of the shop.

"Edith! Edith Mortimer!" called George Chester, in an agitated tone. "Come back. It's all a mistake. I will make it right."

Edith did not answer, nor turn back, but left the shop with her illusions broken.

The next day it was announced in society that the engagement was broken. Three months later there was a new engagement, but this time it was Doctor Goodwin who had gained the prize for which so many were striving.

The poor girl soon obtained remunerative employment through Edith's influence, and she and her mother never again knew want.

As for George Chester he rued bitterly his fatal mistake; but for Edith it was a most fortunate one, since it saved her from marrying a man whom she would have despised, and gave her a husband whom she could respect as well as love.

C. F. Preston.

"HILDA'S

HERO."

A Story of the Coming

Together of Two Affinities.

His name was Hugh Pollard; his age six-and-twenty. Everybody in Screwford knew him and liked him; he was one of the foremen at the Wearford Valley Cloth Mills.

One wonders by what fatal instinct mill owners are led to choose such lovely spots for defilement. Wearford Valley was perhaps half a mile long, its steep sides covered with hanging woods of beech, with primroses and bluebells, watered by an ever-running melodious stream, roofed from bank to bank with sweet grasses and wild flowers.

A painter, a poet, any man with a soul to discover, stood a good chance of discovering it there. Even if there were no soul to discover, the chance was equally good that the fact of its absence would be discovered. And that was something.

One Saturday afternoon, in the middle of May, a carriage and pair stood before the principal shop in Screwford.

Presently a couple of ladies, one middle-aged, and the other young, came out of the shop, and stood chatting for some moments on the pavement, before entering their carriage.

While thus engaged, Hugh Pollard came along the street towards them. In dress he looked what he was—a workman of the better kind. He was a tall, well-set-up, good-looking fellow, with an unusually refined face; he carried himself erect, and had a manly bearing. He glanced an instant at the elder lady, then at the horses, which were handsome animals, and passed on. The ladies entered the landau, and the carriage rolled away, overtaking and passing the young workman.

"Aunt, do you know who that young man is we have just passed?" inquired the younger of the two.

The elder turned her head, and looked back at the person indicated. Settling herself again, she said:

"Yes. Why do you ask, Hilda?"

"He seemed to remind me of someone."

"That is Hugh Pollard. You remember the Pollards?"

"You don't mean the Pollards of Berle?"

"Certainly. Old Mr. Pollard, you know, owned the three largest mills in the place. He failed while you were abroad. It was an awful crash. Your father, I believe, lost about two thousand pounds in it."

"And was that Hugh? Hugh Pollard? I used to play with him," murmured Hilda. Her voice seemed sad, and all the light had vanished as by magic from her sweet face.

"Yes, we used to know them. It was very sad, dear. The old gentleman died soon after, and Mrs. Pollard and her son were left penniless."

"What is he doing about here, aunt?"

"Ah, now, I do think that is the funny part about it. Why they should stay about here, so near to where they once lived so differently, I cannot make out. It seems so strange."



"But what is he doing now? He looked like a workman."

"So he is, I believe. Let me see; what did I hear about him? Ah, I remember. He went—he was only a boy at the time, you know—he went and got a situation at some cloth mills, and worked side by side with many of his father's former workpeople. Odd, wasn't it?"

"And now?"

"I heard some time ago that he was a foreman, or something of that kind, at the Wearford Mills. But just think of it! He was bred as a gentleman. Why, three months before he was working as a common weaver, he was studying at Cambridge."

"But he had his poor, widowed mother to support."

"Oh, of course it was very noble of him, I suppose. Certainly it was brave. Dear me, Hilda, how time does fly! That was twelve years ago, and it seems only yesterday, so to speak. You were a girl of ten. And now you—"

"Why didn't you speak to him, aunt?"

"Why, Hilda, child, what do you mean? How very absurd! Besides, it is kinder not to notice him in his present condition. Of course, if he should ever lift himself up again, we should be only too glad to welcome him."

"I wonder what value he would place on the welcome?" remarked the girl Hilda, in a voice that was fed with the air of a mood too high and broad for scorn or sarcasm. Nevertheless, on the delicate ear of stately and conventional Mrs. Rickard it grated with the suggestion of a discord.

"If he were a wise man he would attach great value to the welcome," she answered coldly. "But there, enough of an unpleasant subject. Just look at the slope of that wood; did you ever see such a lovely carpet of bluebells?"

Hilda Carrington was an orphan, and lived with her uncle and aunt, Major and Mrs. Rickard. Ten years of her life, however, had been spent in a young ladies' seminary.

She was a tall, handsome girl, with a brilliant colour and a fine figure. She looked the lady down to the ground, and she was what she looked. Her face was in itself a fortune, not simply on account of its pure, high-bred loveliness, but more especially because of its exquisite womanliness, its strength, its intelligence, its humanity.

She suggested at first sight, and at last sight, nothing petty, nothing thin, nothing acrid. Face and form, manner and voice, spoke clearly of a nature rich in passion, in sentiment, in sympathy, in practical wisdom.

She did many foolish things, but they made a better impression than the wise things of many others. She had a large soul, which is better for a woman than a large intellect, and quite as effective. And she believed in soul—a woman's sweetest faith the world over.

Frequently left alone with her thoughts the image of Hugh Pollard haunted her.

All the old child-life came back, and its memories, which she shared in common with Hugh, were still vivid and fragrant. She had been fond of boys; would have liked to be a boy herself; had affected their ways and manner. The boys had been fond of her evidently, for she had memories of half-a-dozen lads who had been her close friends.

Among them all, Hugh Pollard stood out as the handsomest, the sweetest tempered, the bravest, and most gallant. A stout-hearted little gentleman, a thorough-bred through and through. And now— Oh! it was pitiful, she thought.

He was thirteen, and she was nine; it must have been summer time; he put his arm round her neck and kissed her, and added, in an explanatory tone:

"My stars, Hilda, you are a delightful girl, and I do love you!"

No other boy had ever done that or said that; it took place in a hayfield, and even now the scent of the new-mown hay was in her nostrils.

Again, they were together in a little valley, in the shadow of a hanging wood, for the day was hot. Below them was a babbling brook, crossed by a hand-rail bridge. On the other side was an old wall, very high, and clothed with ivy. They sat and gazed at the wall, and fell wondering what was on the other side of it.

Suddenly a head popped over the wall and a voice said:

"Well, my dears, suppose you come in and see for yourselves."

They went in, like true adventurers, and made a find. Such gooseberries, such strawberries, such currants! The apples were not ripe—more was the pity—nor the pears; but they strengthened the sense of abundance.

There was a cottage, too, as pretty as a shell; and an old man, with a laughing face and a white beard; and an old woman with white curls over her ears, and a sweet face, and the softest of voices.

They stayed there, it seemed, for hours, and ate fruit and cream, and new bread, and butter, and drank tea by the cupful, feeling that it added to their dignity. It was Paradise, which if not found in childhood, is for ever a land unknown.

It is not easy to forget those who stole with us into Paradise, and by the same token the girl grown woman did not forget the boy grown man.

For some days Miss Carrington was in doubt; then she did something that was distinctly characteristic. She left home alone with one small trunk and spent the night with a friend who lived five miles distant.

The next day, as Miss Morel—her middle name—she quietly returned to Screwford and took rooms in an unpretending, vine-covered cottage, the home of Hugh Pollard.

One would not like to say that Mrs. Pollard, Hugh's mother, had no soul; gallantry alone would forbid it. Still, the fact is undeniable that she had a strange sense of being without something that she ought to have had.

The glorious air did not exhilarate her. The superb outlook did not make her break forth into singing. The near beauty of her own garden did not touch her spirit and make it quiver with a nameless tender joy.

This was the way that things affected her son; but she, poor woman, could not forget the past any more than she could love the present.

Pollard, however, had this advantage over his mother—not only had he discovered his soul, but he had also made the profoundly fascinating discovery of his soul's affinity. His other self—his second soul—his feminine counterpart!

"Why don't you marry, Hugh?" his mother once ventured to ask one evening as they were walking in the garden.

"Because I have never fallen in love, and I never shall unless"—and he hesitated.

"Unless what, my son?"

"Oh, you needn't be frightened—not the least bit in the world. There is no fear of it happening."

"No, no; but tell me, what is it?"

"Not with that serious voice and face. Ah, there, now

the sun is out and the land is beautiful, I will tell you. Years and years ago, in what seems now like another life, as a lad I had a playmate—a girl. I don't know what has become of her; her people were very rich; I suppose she is married. I loved her—we were only children, you know, but I loved her. She was such a plucky, royal-hearted girl! Now, if Hilda Carrington turned up, I wouldn't answer for the results."

"What do you mean, Hugh? Would you forsake me for her?"

"Now, now don't be so tragic. Hilda Carrington is about as likely to 'turn up,' in that sense, as I am to be made King. Why—why, I'm a mechanic, a poor workman. And she, by Jove!—like as not she's a millionaire's wife now. No, there's no danger. But she has stood since my boyhood for my ideal, mother."

"If she beckoned me, I should say to myself, 'There stands the kingdom of Heaven beckoning me, and blessed is the man who leaves everything for the kingdom of Heaven's sake.'"

There was a ring now, a passion, an enthusiasm in his voice that nothing could hide. His mother made no answer, but an anxious look came into her eyes. "Let us go towards the house," he said, after a pause. "I see our new lodger is picking roses."

Ah, that new lodger! He did not understand it a bit, but she was like an electric battery, he thought. If he looked at her, if he spoke to her, if he even thought about her, there was something about her that made him tingle. What it could be remained a mystery to him for some weeks.

One day, however, it came upon him like a flash—she reminded him of Hilda Carrington! Then he laughed, fell a-whistling, and felt comfortable—more comfortable than he had felt for some time.

"She is no more like what Hilda would have grown into than chalk is like cheese." He told himself this audibly, and felt convinced of its accuracy. He felt so brave, so sagacious. He had explored the mystery; he had broken the charm.

Mentally he laughed to scorn her power over his imagination. He felt quite eager to see her again, to speak to her, that he might realise how the virtue had gone out of her, how dead she had become.

He had not long to wait. It was a delicious evening in June, and the sun was drooping down behind the hills in dull red splendour. She was sitting in an arbour, in a low rocking chair, and the glory of the sun was upon her.

He came along the garden path and raising his hat to her would have passed on; but she spoke to him, and he stood still.

"Do you ever row on the lake, Mr. Pollard?"

"Sometimes, Miss Morel."

"Do you enjoy rowing?"

"Oh, yes. Do you row?"

"No; but I should like to—if I had someone to teach me."

"Oh, I will—" He stopped suddenly, like a hunter at a high fence; and, like a skilful rider, she put him at it again, and helped him over with a touch and a word.

"Will you?" she exclaimed, and her face lit up gloriously.

"Oh, yes; with all the pleasure in the world."



"If I am not detaining you." She glanced at the vacant chair, and he said:

"Not in the least. May I?"

She nodded slightly, smiled, and the faintest of flushes deepened her brilliant colour. They talked rowing, they talked landscape, they talked next week's athletic sports, they talked church, they talked politics, they talked—bless me, they talked everything except the main thing, to wit—themselves.

He talked with ease and intelligence, she thought, and, better still, with that subtle sympathy and cast of thought that bespoke the Varsity man, not the weaver of Wearford.

"He is still a gentleman to the core of his brain. He might never have left us. He is one of us yet, and I am so thankful!" was the way she put it to herself that night as she looked at herself in the glass.

And he? He did not come in till late; he had walked the garden for hours. A light was burning in her room; he watched it for some minutes, then went indoors and spent the night with his pipe and his thoughts.

"What a weak fool I am," he said to himself. "I am false to Hilda, my ideal. If she stood before me in flesh and blood, she could not move me more than this woman does. As much! I don't believe she would have a show at all. What does it all mean? She's like music to me—like magic, bewitching music! And all the time I'm fool enough, ass enough, pig-headed enough, to pretend that her charm is Hilda's charm. I looked at her profile, and thought it like Hilda's. I looked in her eyes and saw Hilda's eyes. Her voice was Hilda's voice."

"I'll speak to mother to-morrow. One of us must go, or I am lost."

Not until the evening of the next day did he find an opportunity to speak to his mother alone. He had just made her comprehend that he had something serious to say, when Miss Morel appeared in the doorway.

"Will you give me a lesson in rowing this evening, Mr. Pollard?" For a moment he looked at her coldly, and she added, in an apologetic tone, "Not if you are tired."

Their eyes met and Hugh Pollard was no longer master of his own actions. It was in the gloaming when they returned home, and Mrs. Pollard had gone down to Screwford. They sat together in the arbour talking. Bit by bit the conversation took a personal turn, and she told him how she was her own mistress, and alone in the world.

"The closest friend I ever had was a boy. We were boy and girl together," she said.

"Ha! is that so? That is much the case with me." He sighed, and added: "That was in the old days, when I thought I was going to be a gentleman all the days of my life."

"Did you care for her much?"

"I have lived on her memory. She has been my ideal until—now."

"Do you mind telling me her name?"

"Oh, you won't know her. Hilda Carrington was her name."

"Do you think you would know her again if you saw her?"

"Know her? Well, I think my soul would, if my senses didn't."

"Am I—at all—at all—like her?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

He laughed lightly; then he bent towards her, and, as he gazed into her burning face, suddenly there burst upon him like a flash of lightning, a thought that made him start from his seat and kneel beside her. "Oh, can it be? or am I dreaming? Am I dreaming? Tell me, who are you?" he cried.

"I am Hilda Carrington! Oh, Hugh! Hugh!"

In another moment he held her in his arms.

And the sequel you will read. They were married, of course. And Society had much to say about the match at first. But Hugh was not long in gaining his place even in its eyes. He was able, far seeing, and industrious, and he prospered.

He acquired a large moneyed interest in the mills and this same Society welcomed him with open arms.

A. N. Abell.



THE BOTTLE OF CEMENT.

Telling of a Lover's
Strange Predicament.

MR. WITHERS' recent experience of the incompatibility of the coat-tail pocket and glass bottles was very painful and embarrassing.

He had returned to his home after a brief visit to London, and had brought with him as a present for Miss Wilson—to whom he was betrothed—a bottle of that remarkable cement which is sold by pavement merchants, and which is by them represented as being much stronger than wrought iron.

It had occurred to him that this cement would be a very nice thing to have in his future house, since, with it, all sorts of broken china and glass could be mended.

On the evening of his arrival home, he put the cement-bottle in his coat-tail pocket, and called on Miss Wilson, intending to offer it to her as soon as he entered the house.

Mr. Withers was ardently attached to the young lady; and when he saw her before him, he not unnaturally forgot all about such merely earthly matters as cement.

The parents of the young lady welcomed him politely, and, after a few moments of conversation, withdrew with a discretion which it is to be wished that all old people would emulate. Being of a frugal mind, Mr. Withers promptly lowered the gas, and proceeded to make himself at home.

The bottle was a stout one, and would perhaps have withstood any ordinary pressure, but as Miss Wilson weighed fully ten stone, and as the back of the small rocking-chair was of hard wood, it is not strange that the bottle yielded.

Mr. Withers was so much interested in the weather and other subjects, such as usually absorb the attention of young men in his position, that he did not notice the breaking of the glass, and it was not until an hour later that a false alarm of father in the front hall induced Miss Wilson to hie quickly to the sofa, and suggested to Mr. Withers the advisability of turning up the gas.

The cement had done its work, and Mr. Withers did not get up to attend to the light, but requested the young lady to discharge this duty for him. She did so, and then noticed his pained and preoccupied expression. To her anxious inquiries he admitted that he felt a little faint and would like a glass of water.

Miss Wilson hurriedly went for the water, reproaching herself for being so heavy, and accusing herself of selfishness and want of consideration.

In her absence the young man made superhuman efforts to wrench himself loose, but the cement refused to yield. When Miss Wilson returned with the glass of water, he looked so much worse that she was really frightened, and he was compelled to tell her the real state of the case.

She was a practical person, and timidly suggested that if she were to call pa, "perhaps pa might be able to free you;" but Mr. Withers said no; he could not bear the mortification of being found in such a situation by any father.

It was finally agreed that he should wait until a late hour, and should take the chair home with him. This was accordingly done, and had not the unfortunate young man been arrested by a local constable, who only discharged him when a severe test proved that his possession of the chair was purely involuntary, his misfortune might never have become generally known.

When disasters such as this are liable to happen to the wearers of coat-tail pockets, it becomes doubtful whether they are not altogether too hazardous for general use. In fact, good authorities maintain that the coat-tail pocket is positively detrimental, and that it should be abolished. E. P. Anson.

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN.

FIRST PRIZE,

£25.

CASH DOWN.

SECOND PRIZE,

£10.

CASH DOWN.

THIRD PRIZE,

£5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES (measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches),
together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,
And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, each one fitted with a
Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct. Only one name must be written on each line.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to **BRADSHAW'S GUIDE**, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or **ROOM EIGHT**, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of \$25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of \$10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES." Five more lists will appear.

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tying competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:

ABGHIIMNR... Birmingham.

SEVENTH LIST.

73. BEEKMOPR

74. AADEFHMNR

75. ABDEEILLNOP

76. AACEMNR

77. AAADHILLNRR

78. AHLLOOWY

79. ACDNOOPRSY

80. AAENRRRST

81. ADEFHLMOOSW

82. BCEGIKLLSY

83. AABELLLSTW

84. EEORTTTUX

Name

Address



A Woman Hater.

Which Tells of How a Closed Door Led to a Marriage.

EVELYN TREVOR and her young pupil bent their steps towards their favourite haunt, the picturesque little wood at the furthest extremity of the grounds of Mostyn Grange.

It was a lovely April morning, the birds warbled their love ditties in the trees overhead,

among the delicate green Spring foliage, while the ground was carpeted with the pale yellow primrose and the dainty blue-bell.

The child clapped her hands gleefully:

"Oh! do look, Miss Trevor, what lovely flowers we shall have to decorate Daddy's room! We must fill our two baskets and then come back for more."

"Is your father very fond of flowers, Daisy?" queried Evelyn, as they busily set to picking the sweet-smelling buds.

"Oh, I do not know," answered Daisy, a little sadly; "you see, it is three years now since I have seen Daddy, and I was such a wee tot then," she added with a superior, very-much-grown-up sort of air, "that I hardly remember what his tastes are. But surely he must love flowers—flowers are so beautiful, and my Daddy, who is such a hero, must be fond of all beautiful things, don't you think so, Miss Trevor?"

Evelyn smiled at the child's guileless enthusiasm.

"You are very fond of your father, Daisy?" she said, half wistfully.

"Of course, Daddy comes first in my heart, then Grannie, and then you, dear Miss Trevor"—and impulsively the child flung her arms around her governess and hugged her.

The young girl warmly responded to the effusive caress.

"Darling little Daisy!"

"I shall tell Daddy how good you have been to me ever since he went away and Daddy shall love you too!"

"Hush, hush, child, you are talking nonsense; little girls must never speak about things which they do not understand."

"But, dear Miss Trevor, Daddy *must* love you if I ask him to."

"Daisy, you must not say such foolish things, or I shall be quite angry with you."

"And that would be the very hardest punishment you could inflict on me"—and once more the warm-hearted child embraced her governess.

It was now three years since Evelyn Trevor had come to Mostyn Grange, engaged by Captain Mostyn's mother to look after his little motherless daughter, while he himself was fighting in South Africa.

Mrs. Mostyn had been most kind to her little granddaughter's governess, while, as for Daisy, her warm little child's heart had gone out at once to Miss Trevor, so that Evelyn had been very happy during those past three years.

Now a change was to take place, the "Master," as he was styled by the servants and villagers, was returning home at last after his long absence. At Captain Mostyn's own wish he had remained out in Africa long after the conclusion of peace, instead of returning to England.

Evelyn dreaded, she knew not what, feeling somehow the

greatest awe of the father of her little pupil, and at any rate, she was sure his advent would interrupt the even course of their present life.

When they had picked as many flowers as their baskets could contain, they wended their way back through the long avenue of centenary elms which were one of the chief features of the beautiful old Grange, and immensely admired by tourists when the grounds were thrown open to visitors once a week.

They passed under the massive old stone archway, and through the heavy oak door into the large, mediæval flagged hall, with the monumental carved-stone chimney at the far end, and the walls hung with antlers and quaint, old-fashioned weapons.

Here, in olden times, the Lord of the Manor was wont to sit at his hospitable board; he and his family and his companions in arms, gathered at the high end of the board, while the menials, foresters, and soldiers sat below the salt.

Evelyn had greatly admired the architectural beauty of this hall when first she had come to the Grange, but now she was so accustomed to it that she and Daisy passed quickly through and ascended the massive dark oak stairs, lit by the large stained glass windows, through which the rays of the sun flowed in with rich ruby and gold tints. They entered the "West Room," which from time immemorial had been the apartment occupied by the owners of Mostyn Grange.

The young girl and the child with deft fingers disposed all their floral treasures in old china bowls and rare and costly crystal vases; these bright touches of colour seemed to enliven the gloomy, old-world room.

"We might have got the gardener to give us his choicest orchids from the hot houses, but I have always heard Granny say that Daddy hated everything artificial, so it was best only to use these wild flowers."

Daisy's little tongue ran glibly on as they put the finishing touches to the final adornment of the room.

Just then Mrs. Mostyn's maid came up to Evelyn.

"Please, miss, madam would like to see you when you are at liberty to come to her in her sitting-room."

"Very well, Ruth, please tell Mrs. Mostyn I shall go to her directly I have taken off my out-door things."

A quarter of an hour later Evelyn entered the old lady's private sanctum.

"You wished to speak to me, Mrs. Mostyn?"

"Yes, dear, come and sit down close to me."

Mrs. Mostyn was one of those ideal old ladies so rarely to be found nowadays in our twentieth century, when women positively refuse to get old-looking, and cling to their perennial youth, and the white-haired grandmother seems to be a feature of the past.

Most ladies now, no matter what their age may be, have golden tresses or ebony locks, and smooth, unwrinkled faces. But Mrs. Mostyn did not approve of modern innovations, and she spurned the new and wondrous arts of the toilet-table. She always wore a plain, black silk dress, ruffles at her neck and wrists of the most exquisite old cream-tinted lace.

Her silver hair was braided back from her broad brow under a neat widow's cap which she had never left off since her husband's death, full five-and-twenty years ago; she was brisk and active in spite of her age and always cheerful, though

she had confided to Evelyn that her life had not been free from many deep and cruel sorrows.

Evelyn seated herself on the couch by the elder lady's side and Mrs. Mostyn took her hand.

"I have something very disagreeable to say to you, child," she said gently.

The girl started; during the three years that she had been an inmate of Mostyn Grange, she had never heard an unkind word from the old lady. What could she possibly mean?

"I have been unfortunate enough to displease you, Mrs. Mostyn?" Evelyn faltered.

"No, no, dear, certainly not; it is something in connection with my son's return."

"He wishes you to dismiss me?"

"No, indeed; in fact my son does not trouble his head about you in any way; he is quite satisfied with the fact that I tell him I have secured for Daisy a first-class governess with whom I am absolutely satisfied."

"You are very kind," murmured Evelyn, but sorely troubled at the mysterious tidings which Mrs. Mostyn seemed so unwilling to communicate to her.

"Well, my dear, it is no use beating about the bush, I have an unpleasant thing to do, and I must bravely muster up courage to tell you. I am sorry to say that we shall have to change our pleasant institution of your having all your meals in the dining-room with us; the advent of my son obliges me very much against my will to have your meals served to you in the school-room."

Evelyn flushed hotly.

"Oh, it is of no consequence; indeed, it is only natural that Captain Mostyn should object to sit down at the same table as his daughter's governess."

Mrs. Mostyn kindly patted the young girl's cheek.

"Now, now, child, your pride need not be up in arms; I was afraid you would feel this keenly—"

"I ought not to do so, for I know it is the custom in most houses for the governess to have her meals served in her own room; it is you, dear Mrs. Mostyn, who have spoilt me."

"I assure you, my son has expressed no opinion on this subject, it is not that he would object to taking his meals with you because you are a governess; no, indeed, my Lionel has too much sense for that, but he would veto the presence of any woman, were she a princess of the blood royal. He has a rooted aversion to our whole sex, and is what we commonly term a woman hater."

Evelyn looked up with a puzzled expression.

"But Captain Mostyn is a widower; how did he bring himself to marry one of our despised sex?"

Mrs. Mostyn sighed.

"Yes, indeed, he married and in that fact lies the secret of my poor boy's hatred and contempt for all women. His wife—but, nay, we may not speak ill of the dead, besides, she is Daisy's mother. Suffice it to say she made Lionel absolutely miserable, and when her untimely death brought their unhappy married life to an end, he vowed from henceforth he would never have anything more to do with women."

"With the exception of his own mother (thank God he makes an exception in my favour), he thinks that all women are false, and he despises and hates them. You see, dear, I tell you all this, so that you may not feel that the change in our arrangements is meant as a slight upon you."

Evelyn lifted the old lady's hand to her face and pressed her lips to it.

"Dear Mrs. Mostyn, you are always so good and thoughtful for me; how can I ever be grateful enough for all your kindness to me? Please forgive the outburst of ill-placed pride I displayed just now."

"Never mind that, child. Only I must beg of you, as a special favour, to avoid as much as

possible coming in contact with my son. I do not suppose his stay here will be of very long duration, as, ever since his wife's death, he has always sought to be on active duty abroad; and he has always been to the front wherever there was fighting going on. Thank God, his life has been spared to me in spite of all the perils he has courted so recklessly. He is passionately fond of his little daughter, who mercifully is not one bit like her mother. She takes after her father."

"Daisy is very like you, Mrs. Mostyn."

"Yes, so people say; Lionel was always supposed to have inherited my features and his father's character."

That same evening Captain Mostyn arrived. Evelyn was sitting in the school-room, when she heard the bustle and noise of his arrival. Daisy had been fetched down by Ruth, in order to be by her grandmother's side to welcome back the returning wanderer, and Evelyn sat facing the supper-tray which the footman had just brought up to her.

It was a dainty little meal, but the young girl did not feel hungry; it was the first solitary meal she had taken in this house; and she felt sad and lonely. Two big tears were slowly coursing down her cheeks.

"How childish and silly I am," she exclaimed, and to change the current of her thoughts she began pacing up and down the school-room.

She stopped in front of a small bracket on which stood a large photograph of Captain Mostyn in khaki uniform, which he had sent to his little daughter from Cape Town. Evelyn took it up and gazed at it intently; a good-looking face cer-



She started back—a tall man in evening dress was standing in the doorway.

tainly, but with a stern and determined look which proclaimed the man therein depicted to have an iron will.

Just then the door was flung open and Daisy rushed into the room. Evelyn dropped the photograph with a guilty look and burning cheeks, but Daisy was much too wildly excited to notice anything.

"Oh, Miss Trevor, Daddy says I may stop downstairs this evening for dinner in honour of his home-coming. I have just run up to tell you, and also to beg you to go to Daddy's room for me, please. I have not time, as he told me to come down at once.

"This morning, as we were arranging the flowers, my little brooch with the pearl daisies Daddy sent me came unfastened, and I left it on the table, forgetting to pick it up again. Will you please fetch it and keep it for me? Daddy would think it so careless of me to leave it on his table."

"Very well, dear, I shall go at once if you are quite sure your father is not in his room."

"Oh, no, he is with Granny in the drawing-room, and I cannot get hold of Ruth or any of the maids to fetch me my brooch."

Daisy danced gleefully out of the room, and Evelyn, taking a small hand lamp, proceeded down the dimly-lit corridor towards the "West Room." The door was open and she glided noiselessly in, making straight for the table, where the child declared she had left her brooch.

The room was in total darkness save for the uncertain light shed by the small lamp Evelyn carried; she lost some time seeking about among the books and nick-nacks on the table, ere she found the missing trinket, then, just as she laid her hand on it and grasped it, she heard the distant sound of the hall-door opening, a sudden gust of wind swept into the room, blew out the light in Evelyn's hand, while the door slammed to violently.

"How provoking," she thought, "but it does not much matter, I can easily find my way to the door, and feel for the handle till I find it."

Very carefully she groped her way to where she felt sure the door stood, but seek as she might, she failed to discover the handle, and she very soon realised that hers was no easy quest. She felt up and down, but everywhere her hand only came in contact with the smooth oak panelling.

She went round the whole room, feeling carefully against the wall, thinking she must be wrong about the place where she thought the door stood, but all in vain, there seemed to be absolutely no outlet to this room.

Suddenly, with a feeling of intense horror, something flashed across her mind which she had heard of vaguely from Ruth when first she came to Mostyn Grange, about the "West Room" having been used in the time of Cromwell to conceal cavaliers, and that it had been fitted up for that special purpose as a sort of secret chamber, the door was concealed in the panelling, and only opened at the touch of a secret spring.

"Good Heavens!" thought the unfortunate Evelyn, "was it possible that that arrangement still existed in this now modernised house?"

The mere thought of such a possibility was torturing to the now half frantic girl. If this were indeed so, her present predicament was awful, shut up alone in the darkened bedroom of the master of the house, the very man whom she had been told hated the sight of every woman, and of whom Mrs. Mostyn had begged her, as a special favour, to avoid meeting, so long as he remained at the Grange.

Evelyn shuddered at the mere thought of his finding her thus; how could she explain her presence? The quest of the brooch would seem such a futile and childish excuse. Oh, why had she foolishly consented to come to this room?

Every other room in the house was lit by electricity, had this one been left out when all the modern improvements had been carried out in the house? Once more she started round the room, hoping to lay her hand on the electric switch, but her search, alas, again proved to be fruitless!

She dared not alarm the house by calling out or knocking on the wall, no, she must trust to one of the maids coming in

later to attend to the room before Captain Mostyn came upstairs. Oh, surely it was impossible that no one would come to release her before he came, some one must turn up to save her from that. The unfortunate girl sank down on a chair and indulged in that most feminine of luxuries, a good cry.

Time wore itself on, and to her it seemed that she must have been shut up for days in this dark room waiting for some impending and awful doom with no possible hope of escape.

Suddenly she heard a slight creaking noise, and at the same time the room was flooded in light; she looked up for one moment then shrank back, crouching in her corner when she saw a tall, dark gentleman in evening dress standing in the doorway with his hand still on the electric knob, which she had so vainly sought.

When he saw Evelyn he started back, and the deep frown and angry flush on his face made her feel like a miserable, guilty creature as she reluctantly came forward, stammering excuses.

"Daisy had lost her brooch and she begged me to fetch it; the wind blew out my lamp and slammed the door—and—and I could not find my way out." She gasped out the last words in a low, hoarse voice. Oh, could she ever forget the look of cold, withering scorn he cast on her, as he said in hard, deliberate tones:

"I presume you are Miss Trevor? To-morrow you will give what explanation you may think best to Mrs. Mostyn, on the subject of your extraordinary conduct this evening. She is at liberty to believe you or not."

Then he stood aside to let the unhappy girl pass out. Poor Evelyn, she felt as if a hard, cruel blow had been dealt her in the face.

After a sleepless night, white-faced and utterly miserable, she sought Mrs. Mostyn. Would her kind benefactress credit her unlikely tale, or would she, like Captain Mostyn, doubt her word? If so, Heaven help her, she would have to leave her place and seek another situation, with her name under a cloud.

Directly she entered the room the old lady held out her hand. "My poor child, what a very unfortunate occurrence! Lionel has just been in to tell me."

"Oh, Mrs. Mostyn, he does not believe me!"

"No, but I believe you, Evelyn; that wretched, stupid, secret door is the cause of all the mischief."

Evelyn sank on her knees, and, hiding her face in her hands, burst into tears.

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Mostyn, for trusting me!"

"Yes, dear, I do trust you implicitly; you need have no fears on that subject, but as my son is so terribly prejudiced against the whole of woman-kind, and against you in particular after that wretched incident of last night, I feel it will be better, perhaps, for you to return to your mother for a short time while Lionel remains here. Daisy can be told that she is to have a holiday while her father is here. Mind, child, I am not sending you away, but I think it advisable for you to leave us for a short time. Still, if you prefer to stay, I leave you quite free."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Mostyn, but you are right: I shall go home to-day."

"As soon as Lionel leaves, I shall send you word, and you will return to us at once."

A few hours later Evelyn had packed her things, her box was sent to the station in one of the traps, she herself elected to walk by the pretty winding path, which skirted the river and led to the village.

As she was slowly walking on, with a heavy heart at leaving the dear old Grange, where she had been so happy, she suddenly heard a child's scream and a loud splash as of someone falling into the river. She rushed forward in time to see little Daisy struggling in the water.

The child had evidently slipped from the bank in trying to reach a flower or reed, and the current, being pretty strong there, was dragging her towards the mill dam a little lower down, where she would inevitably be dashed to pieces against the revolving wheel.

Evelyn felt there was not a moment to lose, and without an instant's hesitation, she flung herself into the icy cold element.

She was a fairly good swimmer, but her progress was much impeded by her clothes, which clung around her and seemed to drag her down with their awful weight, and, as already mentioned, the current was very strong at this particular point of the river.

However, she reached Daisy just as the child was sinking after having managed to keep herself afloat for a time by striking out wildly with both hands and feet. Evelyn caught her round the waist, whispering:

"Don't struggle, darling, trust me, I shall save you."

But the frightened child clung desperately to Evelyn, and her efforts, added to the wet, clinging clothes, made it a deadly and terrible strain for the exhausted girl to reach the bank.

At last, however, she did succeed in landing herself and the rescued child, but she was so utterly worn out that she lost consciousness and fell on the grass, still clasping little Daisy in her arms, just as Captain Mostyn came rushing to the spot.

From a distance he had caught sight of the two struggling figures in the water, but, in spite of his speed, had come up too late to be of any help in the rescue.

Daisy now ran up to him in her dripping garments.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy, I should have been drowned if it had not been for Miss Trevor, she saved me, and now, oh, Daddy, I think she is dead!"

He stopped one moment to tear off his shooting jacket, and wrapping it round the child, said to her:

"Run, Daisy, as quickly as ever you can to the house; tell Ruth to put you to bed, with hot water-bottles, and to give you a hot drink, and tell them to send help for Miss Trevor."

Then he bent over Evelyn, and soon ascertained she had only fallen into a deep swoon. Very gently he raised her in his arms, carrying her along the path in the direction of the house. He soon encountered Mrs. Mostyn and some of the servants hurrying to seek Miss Trevor as Daisy had carried back her tale of the accident. The maids had blankets with them, and in them they wrapped the still unconscious girl, and carried her back to the house.

The ensuing days were terribly anxious ones for all the inmates of Mostyn Grange, for Evelyn, during her three years' stay, had endeared herself to the hearts of all who knew her.

Daisy was none the worse for her sudden immersion in ice cold water, but poor Evelyn lay between life and death, having developed an acute attack of pneumonia.

Captain Mostyn had not contented himself with the advice of the local practitioner, he had telegraphed to London for one of the most eminent physicians, and had also secured a first-rate trained nurse.

"Miss Trevor saved Daisy's life," he told his mother, "she shall at least have everything of the best which money can procure. God grant she may pull through; otherwise the poor girl's death will lie at my door."

Poor Evelyn, hers was a desperate case, the doctors shook their heads and said that perhaps, owing to her youth and strong constitution, she might pull through, but it was very doubtful. Her mother was a confirmed invalid, and could not come to her, but Mrs. Mostyn was untiring in her care and devotion to the sick girl, and she gave the nurse all the help in her power.

Then came the day when the doctors declared that the crisis of the case had been reached, and said that night would decide whether their patient would recover or not.

Mrs. Mostyn and the nurse were watching by the bedside, when Ruth glided into the room and whispered that Captain Mostyn wished to speak a few words to his mother. Mrs. Mostyn rose and came out into the little sitting-room which adjoined the large bedroom, one of the best guest chambers, where Evelyn had been moved so as to have more air than in her own room.

"You wish to speak to me, Lionel?"

"Yes, mother, may I see Miss Trevor?"

"See her, why?"

"She is not expected to recover, and I wish to see her once more. As she is not conscious of what happens about her, it cannot harm her. Mother, do grant me this favour."

Mrs. Mostyn looked earnestly at her son, then said quietly:

"Very well, Lionel, you may see her as you wish it."

She entered the bedroom, whispered a few words to the nurse, who at once retired, and then signed to Lionel to come in. He drew near the bed, where Evelyn, white as marble, lay quite motionless. It seemed as if death had already claimed her for its own.

He bent down over her and pressed his lips reverently to her pale brow, then he drew back, buried his face in his hands, and a shuddering sob broke from him.

"Miss Trevor—Evelyn, will you consent to become Daisy's mother?"

Mrs. Mostyn laid her hand gently on his arm.

"My poor boy!"

He started and seemed almost ashamed that anyone, even his mother, had been a witness of his weakness; he cast one last lingering look on Evelyn, and then silently left the room.

Slowly the terrible night of watching and suspense wore itself away; the clock had just struck two when the library door opened; Mrs. Mostyn knew her son was there keeping his sad, anxious vigil and waiting for news.

"The crisis is over; Evelyn has taken a turn for the better, Lionel; she is saved!"

"Thank God!" he responded fervently.

A fortnight had passed, and Evelyn was so far convalescent as to be able to get up and lie on the couch, which was drawn up by the window, where she could gaze out on the long and lovely vista of sloping lawns and stately avenues. Little



Daisy had been in to see her repeatedly, and the first drive for the patient was now being discussed; as Daisy left the room, Mrs. Mostyn said:

"Evelyn, my son wishes to see you to thank you for saving his little daughter's life."

The girl started and her pale cheeks grew crimson.

"Oh, Mrs. Mostyn, I thought he had left long ago."

"No; he said he could not leave till he knew you to be on the high road to recovery. He has been most anxious on your account and got the best possible medical advice for you."

"Captain Mostyn is very kind; but I would rather not see him, please, if you do not mind."

"But I do mind; Evelyn dear, won't you see Lionel to please me?" pleaded Mrs. Mostyn.

"You have been so good to me, Mrs. Mostyn, that I can deny you nothing. I shall see your son, but it will be a most painful interview to me."

"Will you receive him now?"

"When you will," the girl said wearily with a sigh; "you will stay by me, Mrs. Mostyn?"

"No, dear, I think not," and Mrs. Mostyn smiled.

"Then please send me Daisy."

Mrs. Mostyn bent down to kiss Evelyn.

"Don't be too hard on Lionel, child, because he judged you unfairly once."

Then, before the girl could answer, the old lady left the room. A few moments elapsed, and then there came a gentle tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Evelyn; she half hoped it was Daisy, but the door opened and Captain Mostyn entered. He looked as much embarrassed as the girl herself did. She did not hold out her hand to him, but just bent her head to acknowledge his presence. He drew near the couch.

"I am so glad, Miss Trevor, that you are now rapidly recovering."

"You are very kind, Captain Mostyn."

"I have come to thank you for saving my little girl's life."

"Oh, please do not mention that; I only did what anyone would have done in my place; it was nothing."

"Nothing, Miss Trevor, when you nearly lost your life, through your heroic act!"

She smiled:

"Does Captain Mostyn, a woman-hater, think it of much account whether one woman more or less encumbers the earth?"

"Miss Trevor, this is unkind! I have come not only to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for saving my little Daisy's life, but also to beg your forgiveness for my abominable rudeness to you the first night I saw you. I—"

"Oh! Captain Mostyn please," she hastily interrupted, "do not allude to that evening; it makes me so miserable to think of it. You did not believe me," she added reproachfully.

"Miss Trevor, I behaved like a cad and a brute to you. Can you ever forgive me?"

She averted her head and did not answer. Then he knelt by the couch, and, taking her hand, he whispered:

"Miss Trevor—Evelyn, will you consent to become Daisy's mother; that is, if you can put up with Daisy's father?"

She turned quickly, and snatching her hand from his, exclaimed:

"I do not understand you, Captain Mostyn. You have no right to insult me!"

"Insult you, Evelyn! Does a man insult the woman he loves?"

"You cannot and do not love me, Captain Mostyn. Out of a mistaken sense of gratitude, or perhaps from a false sense of honour, because you misjudged me once, you now offer me a good position—that of your wife. I decline the honour," she said coldly and proudly.

"Evelyn, Evelyn, you are wrong; it is your turn now to misjudge me. I do love you—I swear it by all I hold most holy!"

"You, the woman-hater! how can you love one of my abhorred sex?"

"I am paying a heavy penalty for having so far hated and despised all women! Now the only woman I have ever cared for turns from me and scorns my love!"

"Nay, I do not scorn it, if it is genuine!"

"Evelyn, how can I convince you? If you had seen a fortnight ago the agony I went through when I stood by your bedside and felt that death would snatch you from my grasp, then you would not doubt my love for you."

"When you stood by my bedside—you, Captain Mostyn?"

"Yes; forgive me, but I implored my mother to let me come in and see you once more; I thought you were dying, and, Evelyn—yes, I must tell you, even if you are very angry with me—but I kissed you, as you lay there white and motionless. It is one thing more I have to crave your forgiveness for."

He expected an indignant protest from her, but none came.

"It was no hallucination then," she murmured softly; "it was true—you stood by my bedside?"

"Good Heavens, Evelyn, did you recognise me then?"

"I was in a sort of trance, and I thought I saw you come in and bend over me," (and she lowered her eyes and blushed,) "and kiss me, but I thought it was all a dream!"

"And now you know it is not a dream, you are not angry?"

The slight tremor in her voice and a happy light which had passed transiently across her face gave him a little hope.

"No," she answered very softly.

"Would you rather it had been a dream?"

"No."

"Evelyn, do you believe in my love now?"

"Yes."

"And will you not try to love me back a little?"

"No."

This unexpected and decisive answer shattered all his new-born hopes, a deep groan escaped him; then she laid her hand very gently on his, which lay on the arm of the couch.

"Captain Mostyn, I cannot try to love you a little, because—well, because I already love you a great deal!"

"Evelyn, my darling!"

"Yes, I have always loved you, long before you cared for me, before I ever saw you!"

"But, my own dear Evelyn, how is that possible—how could you love me before you ever saw me?" And he now boldly clasped her to his heart and kissed the little quivering mouth, which had at last been led to confess her heart's secret.

"There, you are doubting my word again, Captain Mostyn!"

"Don't call me Captain Mostyn, please; my name is Lionel."

"Well, Lionel"—she uttered the name softly, as if almost afraid to use it—"you see, I was always hearing your praises sung by your mother and little Daisy; your portraits and photographs were scattered all over the house, and although I was only a governess, I was an idiotic, romantic girl, and was stupid enough to fall in love with a man I had never seen. Then came my first meeting with you, when your cruel, scornful words and looks stung me like the lash of a whip. Oh, why would you not believe me?"

"My poor little darling, what a brute I must have seemed to you."

"No, I loved you still in spite of it all, but it was terrible agony to me, and I made up my mind no one would ever know, and you, of course, least of all."

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Mostyn came in, holding Daisy's hand.

"I hope we are not intruding?"

"Mother, you will have your wish. Evelyn loves you so much that she has consented to put up with me so as to become your daughter. Come here, Daisy, and kiss Miss Trevor; she is going to be your mother and take care of you, and of me!"

"Oh, Daddy, I am so glad!" and Daisy jumped on the couch and flung her arms round Evelyn.

"I said Daddy would love you if I told him to!"

"So, Evelyn," said Mrs. Mostyn, smiling as she kissed the young girl, "you have cured Lionel of being a woman-hater!"

Lily Butler.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

The Story of How a Husband was Brought to his Senses.

HERBERT LATIMER loved his wife, but he liked to occasionally cut loose from her apron strings and enjoy himself. About midsummer, he told Lena that he had "business" in Scarborough, and had to go there—alone, of course. She pouted, and cried, there was an exchange of unpleasant remarks, and Herbert left the house, feeling very unhappy—one of the unhappiest men in London.

An hour later, at the Savoy, he met his old college chum, Reginald Mansfield, to whom he related his troubles, and asked his advice.

"Follow your own inclinations, old fellow," advised Reginald. "Don't permit yourself to be tyrannised by your wife. I am astonished at her efforts to rule you, and only four months after marriage. Go to Scarborough, and she will soon realise the fact that a husband was born to control.

This seemed sensible advice, and in less than a week Herbert Latimer had gone to Scarborough. He had gone without leaving his address with his friend, Reginald Mansfield, and the latter was on his way from the club to Latimer's house to obtain it.

It was his first visit. He had been abroad when Herbert had married, and he had returned but a few days prior to the conversation just reported. On the evening of his arrival he had gone to see a middle-aged lady, an old friend of Herbert Latimer, once the friend of Reginald's own mother. She was a woman of the world, who had kept the depth of her heart and feeling, and who had looked on many of the chances and phases of life with her clear, steady eyes. The talk had turned on Herbert Latimer's wife.

"She is a simple country girl, is she not?" asked Reginald.

"She has a rare and charming nature, strong and sweet—far too good for Herbert. But she adores him—as girls of that character adore men of his."

"Oh, Herbert is not bad."

"Not at all. But weak. A weak Adonis. Men of that kind always have the best love lavished upon them." Mrs. Percy paused a moment. Then she raised her eyes to Reginald's. "She looks like Eleanor," she added, in a gentle tone.

She saw that he changed colour. "How that memory lives with him!" she thought. She alone knew this man as he was. She alone had known closely the dead girl who had been the dream of his young manhood. When people spoke of Reginald as a Lothario, she would remark quietly: "Let us not judge too much from the surface."

"She looks like Eleanor."

Those few words of Mrs. Percy had been persistently in Reginald Mansfield's mind as Herbert Latimer had come to him a few days later with his grievance. They were in his mind as he rang the bell of the young man's house.

Like Eleanor! Was it true? For an instant, as he waited

in the dim drawing-room, he wished that he had not come. Then a curtain was raised and dropped again. A slight, girlish figure in a straight, flowing dress advanced. Mrs. Latimer put out her hand.

"You are a good friend of my husband. I have heard of you often; I'm very glad to see you," she said.

But Reginald Mansfield stood for an instant as one bereft of sense. Mrs. Percy was right. Here was the same rare Madonna type of beauty, the same low, broad brow, the same pathetic mouth, the same expression of the violet eyes—his heart beat fast with the sudden ache that he had so often hoped was stilled.

"Are you ill?" asked Lena Latimer, startled. He had already recovered himself with an effort.

"You will think me absurd," he said lightly; "but you look strangely like—someone I used to know."

In his agitation he forgot the object of his visit.

It was a warm, cloudy morning in August. Herbert Latimer had returned from his outing, and, to his dismay learnt that his wife had gone on a yachting excursion to the Solent with the Wentworths, a family with whom he and his wife were very intimate. But this was not the most important part of the disclosure. Reginald Mansfield was with the party!

This was rather too friendly on the part of his old college chum!

Herbert hastened to the home of Mrs. Percy, and to her related his troubles.

That lady endeavoured to calm him by such words as these:

"Oh, that yachting excursion is all right. Mrs. Wentworth is the model of propriety. And young married women must amuse themselves—even when their husbands are away."

"Oh, this is outrageous!" exclaimed Herbert. "Probably you see nothing wrong in Lena leaving London yesterday to 'amuse' herself, as you say, on the very afternoon that she knew I would arrive?"

Mrs. Percy shrugged her shoulders. Her visitor had turned towards the door.

"Where is the yacht likely to be now? I take it that you are informed, Mrs. Percy."

"I believe it is to return to Southampton to-morrow, or the day after. You are not going?"

But he had vanished.

One moment Mrs. Percy stood musing; and her teeth,



white and fine still, showed in the peculiar smile that parted her lips.

"What will the outcome be?" she murmured. "And then—Alas! what fools, what astonishing fools men can be, at times, to be sure!"

A mist had come up and lay, an impenetrable veil, over the sea. In the prevailing neutrality of the atmosphere's tints, a woman's yachting dress of blue-and-red made a warm, picturesque spot, blurred and deep, in the foggy perspective. A man, stalking along with swift strides, caught a sudden vision of this dash of colour, and of the slender, well-known figure it clothed at an abrupt terminus of the walk.

It was Lena, and she was not alone. A man walked by her side, too, whom he—Herbert—could have no difficulty in recognising. The tall, loosely built, nonchalant figure, was that of Reginald Mansfield.

The two had stopped now. Their backs were turned. But, sharpened to abnormal acuteness, Herbert's senses could divine, as it were, their mental attitude at the moment, betrayed in the pose of their vague, dark silhouettes. Lena, her head bent away from her companion, seemed to be looking out to sea, and, as Herbert advanced rapidly nearer, something listless, dejected, became more clear in the droop of her shoulders.

But Reginald Mansfield looked not at the sea, but at her. He stood near her, so near that his hand could touch her elbow.

The blood surged up in Herbert's heart, and at that instant the two faced about to retrace their steps and saw him advancing.

Lena was the first to speak. She had turned from white to red and back to white. A suppressed trembling had seized her. But her voice was clear and steady.

"Herbert, dear! You here? How did you know where the yacht would be to-day? I thought you were to be in London! Who told you where we were?"

Herbert's white, dry lips, framed two words shortly.

"Mrs. Percy."

Reginald Mansfield raised his eyebrows.

"Ah, yes. To be sure, she would know. You had a jolly outing, I suppose, Latimer?"

Calmly he met the glare of Herbert Latimer's eyes.

But Mrs. Latimer, laughing nervously, had touched her husband's sleeve. She turned her glance to Reginald Mansfield, and there was something like a wild, repressed appeal in it. Did he read its meaning aright? He took off his hat.

"Will you permit me to withdraw, Mrs. Latimer? I am sure that after your separation your husband's companionship must be the only one acceptable."

He nodded to Herbert, but received no look from the latter in return.

The next instant husband and wife were alone, and then the flood-gates of Herbert Latimer's jealous rage and indignation were opened.

Lena stood silent, with downcast eyes, as the hot words poured over her. She was, then, he asked, like every other woman? The great trust he had had in her truth, believing it so perfect that not even the shadow of a frivolous flirtation could touch it, was, then, proved to be unfounded? He had, perhaps, not been a model husband himself. He acknowledged it.

He had been in the wrong. He had gone after his own pleasures. He had seemed to neglect her. He had, in fact, neglected her. He had the misfortune of having been bred among people who looked upon such things as only trivial faults. But, through all, he had always felt, that, faulty as he might be, she was unassailable. Mrs. Percy, however, had suggested to him, by exasperating innuendoes, all that had been going on for weeks. And a flirtation with Reginald Mansfield, of all men! A flirtation with his own friend!

In intolerable despair he talked on. And then he stopped.

What more was there to say? Sharply he turned from her.

Was he going from her? She raised her head, she watched him as he walked away, blindly, as one who is stunned.

"Herbert!" she suddenly cried out, with a rapturous note of joy and love. She ran after him, she clung to him; all her sweet Madonna face was covered with tears and smiles.

"Herbert! Beloved! Beloved! It was only to test you, only to teach you, by your own pain, what mine had been!"

"Truly, truly, I have given no thought to Mr. Mansfield save such thought as one gives a good, good friend. He has seemed very 'attentive,' as the world speaks of such things, but he has been only kind—oh, so kind! You see, I look like—like someone he loved once, and so he was my friend from the first.

"He saw how miserable I was, dear, about your going off on that trip to which I objected. He realised the pain I felt at your seeming indifference—for, indeed, I thought you cared nothing for me any more! Oh, was I not foolish? Do I not see now in your eyes; do I not feel by the clasp of your arms, how much you loved me in truth?"

"But I was wretched, and Mr. Mansfield discovered it, and because he felt as a friend to me he thought of this plan. He and Mrs. Percy. She, too, has been, oh so good to me. Together they contrived it all. She was to see you and tell you when you arrived and I was to go off with the Wentworths on the yacht, and with Mr. Mansfield. It was all to keep up the appearance of the comedy we were playing! And it was to have been kept up much longer; I was not to divulge the truth to you until you were well tried. But I cannot, cannot play this farce another moment when I love you so! I see and feel that you so love me!"

She was weeping now in his arms. Tightly clasped, Herbert held her. When at length she looked up, his face was changed.—graver, colder, firmer than she had seen it.

"Yes, dear Lena, the comedy was played long enough, child, long enough. The lesson has been well-learned. It has been taken to heart."

A fortnight later Reginald Mansfield returned to London. In the evening he went to Mrs. Percy's. She greeted him with an exclamation:

"Where have you been all this time? In hiding? In every manner I have tried to get news of your whereabouts. And not only I, but Lena, and Herbert Latimer himself. I think the latter wants to thank you honestly for bringing him to his senses. He has already thanked me. Never was a conspiracy crowned with more admirable success. They are turtle doves now—turtle doves! Herbert will remain to the end, I believe, a model mate; and as for Lena, she is supremely, completely blissful. You have done good work my dear fellow."

She paused, and then something caused her to regard him more attentively.

"Turn your face to the light," she said brusquely. Off his guard, he did so. Thereupon Mrs. Percy gave a low expostulatory cry.

"Reginald, that is not why you have been in hiding, is it—not truly this, boy?"

At the tone of deep, interested sympathy, Reginald covered his face with his hands. After an interval he raised his head.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I am afraid it is so. I care for her. She is another man's wife, and it has an ugly sound. But the feeling I have for her could not stain a flower. I thought it was only friendly interest at first, because she was so like— But she was too like! It was playing with fire. I have been suspecting my real feeling some time. I knew it when Herbert came back, and by the look in his eyes I realised how much he cared for her, and that they would be reconciled." He got up. "Well, I shall have to live it down, as I did the other."

E. Barton.

Splendid Serial Story.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life.

By **BLANCHE EARDLEY.****NAMES TO REMEMBER.****SIR TREVOR MAITLAND**, of Maitland Manor, Melton.**LADY MAITLAND**, Sir Trevor's second wife. Before her marriage with him she passed as a widow named Mrs. Vernon.**JACK MAITLAND**, Sir Trevor's son by his first wife.**AGNES MAITLAND****MURIEL MAITLAND** } Jack's sisters.**WOOLF MAITLAND**, the present Lady Maitland's only child.**IVY STRANGE**, a foundling with whom Jack is in love.**HERIOT NORTH**, a friend of Sir Trevor.**MIKE HOLLAND**, an ex-convict and burglar who blackmails Lady Maitland, he having been in prison with her first husband.**MARY MASON**, Lady Maitland's maid.**DIGBY SCARLETT**, an explorer and acquaintance of Jack. It was through him that Lady Maitland's first husband was imprisoned.**GILBERT CHASE**, a detective employed by Jack to discover the mystery of Ivy's birth.**VERNON GRANT**, Lady Maitland's first husband.**TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.****"The Bond Between."**

"I AM 'at home' to no one to-day, Lawson," Lady Maitland said slowly, as she crossed the hall on her way to her boudoir; "remember—not at home."

She had been out for a short drive, yet strangely enough the keen, cold breeze of the January afternoon had brought no tinge of colour to her pale, creamy skin, and a restless, alert gleam had lately taken up its residence in her proud, violet eyes. She sank into a low chair by the fire, and let her long fur coat fall loosely from her.

Outside she had met Doctor Gray, and had heard that his patient was progressing as well as could be expected. The fever had not abated, but the wound in the head was healing.

"He will be better—soon," she thought. "Then I can no longer keep him from asking questions. He is clever in spite of his youth; the man Chase will tell him what he knows and suspects—and the girl will speak. Oh, I see clearly the whole panning out of events when that boy rises from his bed!"

She rose quickly and walked to the window, pressing her hot brow against the cold panes.

"And it was that miserable chit who came between me and my future peace!" she muttered, biting her red lips in a spasm of remembrance; how she had been outwitted by a girl whom she despised and used as a tool. "Had she not interfered with the open window, much might have happened that would have simplified matters for me; but as it is, I owe her something for having dared to come between me and my plans. She, the village foundling!"

She caught her breath with a sudden catch at the recollection of that low, cautious outcry of Nurse Beaumont, when she had claimed her attention to a mark on the sleeping girl's brow two nights ago.

What if there really could be anything in it? What if that pale-faced, quivering-mouthed girl were— She laughed harshly as she had laughed in the presence of the woman who had pointed it out. "A mere coincidence," she had said, "an idle phantasy of an ill-educated, emotional brain, that could only adhere to one view about a particular

mark on the brow of any chance child, that it should necessarily be the one remembered years ago!"

She flung back her head and whispered fiercely to the empty room:

"No! That infant, whether stolen or alive, is dead to me; as dead as though I had seen the earth shovelled upon it. No beggar's brat shall be palmed off on me by any hysterical woman. I have turned my back upon the spectres of the past, and shall brook no hand tearing aside the curtains I have drawn. They are dead—dead as—the man they found in the spinny!"

She put her hand to her mouth, to stifle the words she barely breathed, and a slight shiver shook her, as she walked back to the glowing fireplace and held out one slender, white palm to the flames.

It was cold outside, and the dainty boudoir was like a bird's nest—warm and cosy; but the graceful woman in it was like an ice queen, so bloodless and chilly were her hands and feet; even her heart scarcely seemed to beat, the cold was so intense; but her brain was burning, as it had done since the night of the ball, and the internal fire within her seemed to have fuel added to it with each hour.

"Bah! What a fool I am!" she laughed. "The twilight brings shadows out that haunt me! I will ring for the lamps!"

As she raised her hand to the button on the wall, the door opened, and Lawson came into the room.

"If you please, my lady," he began hesitatingly, "Mr. North would like to see you. I said you were 'not at home,' but he insisted on coming in, as he wishes to say 'good-bye,' and would not be able to come again."

"Of course, Lawson; show Mr. North in here at once," Lady Maitland said, "and bring the lights and tea. Where is Miss Maitland?"

"Helping the nurse, your ladyship, with Master Jack," the man replied, and left the room to usher in the impatient visitor.

Alone, Lady Maitland clasped her hands with a sudden nervous gesture.

"Good-bye!" she thought; "then—then Heriot North knows—something! But how much—I wonder, how much?"

The next moment he was in the room, and she with difficulty repressed the exclamation that rose to her lips. They had not met since the night of the *bal masqué*, when she had given him her confidence to the extent of trusting him with a secret commission, and that was nearly a week ago.

But the days that had passed might have been years three times multiplied, since they had glided over the head of the man who had given her his allegiance, even unto the eternal unrest of his future life. His face was grey, and lines stood out where before there had only been faint indications of thought and study; and in his earnest eyes, that had formerly been humorous or tender, was an expression of horror and abasement.

While the servant was in the room, arranging the tea-table and drawing the blinds, they talked commonplaces, as people are wont to do when great issues are at hand. But so soon as the door was closed upon his figure, Lady Maitland turned to her visitor with a world of inquiry in her voice.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

"You have not come to say 'good-bye' ? That was surely only an excuse to see me ?"

He bowed gravely. "No, it was not, Lady Maitland. I am going to London to-morrow; then shortly, I hope, back to India!"

The level, beautifully-marked brows of her ladyship puckered ever so slightly.

"India, Mr. North? Somehow I imagined that you had given up all such ambitions, to remain in England near your friends—the friends that need you!"

"Then," he said bitterly, speaking in quick, uneven tones, "then it was that I thought I had a career of honour before me, even if love had gone by me. But—but since then, I have lost my honour, my self-respect, and everything that an English gentleman holds dear. Now, all that remains for me to do is to return to India, where, in some remote hill station, I may bury myself and try to live down memory!"

"Will you be so good as to tell me when this strange decision was arrived at, Mr. North?" she said quickly, and the cold note of reproach in her voice acted as a lever to the rising passion of the man.

"Need you ask? Can you really mean that you are in ignorance of what has so recently taken place?" he breathed, in a low tone of intreaty. "Why should you and I play at phrasing speeches, when we—know what we do know?"

The heart of the woman fluttered beneath her lace, and her lips quivered faintly as she listened. But she raised her eyes boldly to him and said:

"You have not yet answered my question, Mr. North. When was it that your thoughts turned again to India?"

"On the night, or rather the early dawn of the morning after the *bal masqué*, when I was burning—something," he replied, his voice hoarse with emotion—"that morning saw the night of my honour, and—and of yours! Oh!" he cried, "I trusted you so fully; why did you not repose just a little confidence in me before—that—took place? Surely, surely, there was some other alternative?"

There was a short silence, broken only by the dropping of a burnt out log into the china fireplace, then she answered him:

"Why do you speak in such ambiguous language, Mr. North? I am not afraid of anything you may say, so why wrap your pill in sugar for me? Perhaps," she went on bitterly, "I made a mistake in supposing that you would be my friend, or that I could trust you to do something for me without afterwards throwing it in my teeth. Well, even the loss of your friendship, I suppose I shall survive; but at present it hurts me to find how little I knew you after all."

Stung by her words, he relented a trifle from the harshness of the attitude he had adopted, and replied gently:

"I saw the contents of your parcel; the heat of the fire opened it, almost as though it recoiled from the contact! The slippers, handkerchief, wig—all bore testimony to some strange errand in which you had wished concealment! Then—then—oh, Heaven," he cried passionately—"the agony of saying these things to you—the woman round whom I built the worship of my life—is like smashing the panes of a stained glass window and finding that, after all, it was only a reflected glory!"

"Then the following morning I heard of the finding of the body of—that creature in the spinny, and my hideous doubt grew into a more hideous certainty. But even now," he said, drawing closer to her, and grasping her delicate wrist, "I will believe in you if you swear that this is all a strange coincidence; that in spite of your having sent this poor wretch money to London, and again meeting him near the Manor gates when you told me it was the girl at the lodge; even then, I say, I will gladly believe your word if you say that it was not you who on the night of the ball met that soul before he went to his reckoning!"

Swiftly and cautiously Lady Maitland pondered her reply. It was imperative that this man should not learn the truth; as she knew it, yet, since he suspected so much that was

detrimental, he must be told something that would paint his divinity in less sinister colours—he given some reply that would point to extenuating circumstances.

She turned to him with a sudden impulsive frankness that was not without its charm for the shame-stricken man whom she had chosen for her tool:

"Yes," she said, in a low voice; "you shall learn what has cost me much to keep apart from those I love—much, but not—what you think! For my conscience is clear from that graver charge—I swear that on my word!"

She stopped and flung her white, glistening hands out before her in an abandon of outraged honour.

"Do you think I could have touched my son, whom I love, had such a stain stood between us?"

He bent over her hands silently, but the dread had gone out of his eyes, and he breathed more calmly.

"Put me out of my suspense!" he murmured; "then I will kneel for pardon!"

She smiled wearily. "I lied when I said I had never seen that man before, when you questioned me about him, after you had been to the Messenger Depot in Regent Street. I did not know you then, or I would have spoken more frankly, but I was afraid!"

"Afraid!" he murmured; "in what way?"

"Perhaps," she continued dreamily, "you have heard that when I married Sir Trevor, I was a widow?"

He nodded. "Yes; well?"

"Well," she went on, slowly, clasping her hands tightly; "that creature who was murdered the other night in the spinny, by some strange chance found out my address, and threatened to disclose to Sir Trevor some disgraceful secret he knew concerning—my first husband, unless I paid him for his silence."

She paused, and the lace on her gown rose and fell with her quickened breathing.

"I was terrified," she went on after a pause, "and in my distress made the fatal error of allowing myself to be black-mailed by that man. His demands grew more exorbitant each time, and before the night of the ball he threatened, even after all I had given him, to betray the secret of a dead man to my husband. I disguised myself, as you know, and went to meet him, to beg of him to go away and not worry me any longer."

He leant forward eagerly; each word she said was lessening his burden of doubt, and reinstating her in his holy of holies.

"I understand," he murmured; "how you have suffered, and what a brute you must think me for having imagined such cruel things!"

She raised her hand proudly. "Listen first, before you pronounce judgment! I was desperate when I went to meet that creature, and, had I had the opportunity," she whispered hoarsely, "would like to have silenced him! But when I got further into the spinny I heard a shot, and, afraid of being discovered, I turned and fled back to the Manor."

"The brambles had scratched my hands, hence the state of the handkerchief. Then, hearing that strange things had happened in the spinny, I grew frightened, and gave you the things to destroy. Now you know all," she finished, flinging her head back with its wondrous glory of hair, and looking at him with a sorrowful smile.

"Do you condemn me so ruthlessly after what you have heard? Were you not a little cruel to the woman to whom you vowed an eternal devotion, and then, when she cast herself on your mercy, to think the worst of her afterwards?"

He flushed darkly. "Forgive me; I can only repeat, forgive me! I was a brute; you are an angel wronged by brutes! But you may trust me," he went on, eagerly, "not to betray your confidence. I will cherish it—for it is a bond between us that can never be severed—not even by death."

"I will serve you and stand by you to the end! I believe in your integrity with all my soul! Do not think that I shall ever swerve from my devotion a second time! No mention of your secret shall ever pass my lips. We are knit together in life, in death, by a bond that neither can forget or ignore—for

it is the bond between us of honour and shame; silence and trust! I am henceforth your liege knight!"

He bent over her hand with an old-world reverence, and she smiled slightly. It had been an effort to bring this strong man back into his chains that had so nearly snapped. She was glad that he had not been present when Gilbert Chase had mentioned the woman he had met! But now he was safely made secure, and she knew the voyage to India would not take place.

Suddenly she withdrew her hand with a sudden fear. The handle of the door had slightly turned, and her quick ears had been tuned to hear such delicate sounds.

TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER.

"When Greek Meets Greek."

As they moved apart the door opened and Agnes Maitland came in, smiling sarcastically.

"Ah, Heriot!" she said, with one of her rasping laughs, "so I hear you are going in for dealings on 'Change.'"

"What makes you think that?" he said, quickly recovering from his surprise.

She smiled disagreeably, and sent a swift glance in the direction of her step-mother, who was busy at the tea-table. "Oh, I fancied as I stood at the door, that I heard you and Lady Maitland mention something about 'bonds,'" she said carelessly. "Was I wrong to think that it was concerning stocks and shares?" she went on innocently; "or were you discussing 'bonds' of a deeper nature, and with no relative value to the City?"

The slim right hand of the woman holding the sugar tongs quivered slightly, but no other sign was forthcoming that the sharp innuendo of her step-daughter had gone home.

After a brief conversation Heriot North took his leave, and the two women were alone.

"Is Jack progressing?" Lady Maitland asked in a careless tone. She was thinking about the story she had told the man who had just gone, and was wondering vaguely whether he had believed all the details she had given him.

"Yes," Agnes replied; "the nurse seems to know her duty. By the way," she went on, glancing at the woman seated opposite her, "I met someone quite interesting when I was away; doubly so, because you were admired fervently!"

"Really?" her step-mother murmured; "who was it?"

"A man called Heath," Agnes said slowly; "Ernest Heath, I think his name was, and he happened to see the group I had taken of you all last summer, and immediately swore that you were the image of his second cousin, Margaret Heath. I said that I did not know your maiden name," went on the voice of the inquisitor, "but that you were a Mrs. Vernon before you married father. By the way, what was your maiden name?"

Her ladyship's lips parted with a sudden terror. How she hated this woman with the dissecting tongue and ferret's eyes!

"My maiden name," she began slowly, stirring her tea with an icy hand, "was Pearl Lester; so the man you met must have a cousin strangely like myself!" and her eyes flashed defiance into the narrow, beady ones of the old maid in the chair. "I should like to see him; he would be interesting. I should think."

Agnes smiled. "Then you will have that pleasure very soon, Lady Maitland, for I have taken the liberty of asking Mr. Heath to pay us a visit, and see the lovely double of his cousin."

The white, slender fingers of the beautiful woman listening to the hidden venom in the speech of her step-daughter played nervously with the long turquoise chain suspended from her neck and hanging almost to her waist.

Ernest Heath, the cousin who had been but a short time in the home of her girlhood, before going out to his ranch in California—what strange freak of fortune had flung him in the path of Agnes Maitland, she wondered feverishly! At any cost she must so arrange her time as to be away from the Manor when this man arrived.

She looked up, and caught the ghost of a sneer on the thin, sour mouth of Sir Trevor's daughter, and that sneer braced her to buckle on the armour of self-defence once more.

"I am glad," she said thoughtfully, "that you have met a man to whom you seem to be attracted, Agnes! And I also hope that this time the event will bring about the desired culmination in wedding-bells at Melton Church."

An angry flush mantled the sallow face of Agnes Maitland. The shaft too well did its duty. She raised her eyes and said spitefully:

"Perhaps Melton will be busy with matters other than church bells. For instance, the murder of that man in the spinny. It is a known fact that there is a mystery about it, and I heard yesterday that the detective had picked up—startling evidence—I think were the words."

A tremor shot through the frail-looking woman leaning back in her chair; but no other indication did she give that the speech had any particular import for her.

"Yes," she said languidly, "it is a dreadful affair; why discuss it?"

"Why?" And Agnes Maitland rose to her feet, towering a lean, gaunt figure, with passion-distorted face, above the wife of her father, upon whose aureole of copper hair the firelight flickered. "Why?" she repeated again, in a low whisper; "because I am convinced that the murdered man is the same as he I saw that night walking past the old oak in the spinny—the night that I followed you, and was tricked so cleverly by you and your—accomplice in some secret. But what secret I have never yet discovered. Do you have midnight rendezvous now, Lady Maitland?"

For an instant a steel band seemed to be growing tighter round the brain and heart of her ladyship, and a red mist descended upon her eyes—only for a moment, however; the next she was laughing softly, and her eyes sparkled with amusement as she cried gaily:

"Why, Agnes, your visit has imbued you with the spirit of romance to quite an extravagant extent! It must be the influence of your new admirer, Mr. Wreath—Heath, or some similar name suggestive of rusticity!"

The baffled woman flashed a glance of mingled hate and doubt at her.

"You may laugh at me," she said, in a voice vibrating with suppressed passion, "but in time I shall know the truth regarding your strange taste for wandering about the spinny with tramps; as well as the meaning of the secret sign you have with that fool Heriot North; the bond between you is, I believe, one that reflects no credit to either of you!"

Lady Maitland drew herself up with a calm dignity. "Do not let your foolish tongue go too far," she said softly. "Remember I am your father's wife. And," she added, "it seems rather a shame to call Mr. North a fool! He nearly made you his better half, you know!"

"And would have done," the desperate woman flashed, "had you not come between us with your smiles, and false, glittering eyes! Even then I would not have felt it so much had you prized what you had stolen from me. But, like the rest, you made use of him, employed him as your lackey; for with most women of your temperament, you prefer to wash your dirty linen in other people's tubs!"

She paused, her passion spent. She had been wrung by her own stormy emotions, and the rage of vituperation had fallen foul of the woman upon whom it had been heaped.

She turned to leave the room, then wheeled round. "You think I am mad," she hissed; "or, rather, it pleases you to think so; but remember, I have not forgotten the little incident of the night when you were looking at a certain shining thing in your hand, believing yourself alone! I saw it—I would remember it—again! And I mean to find out all about the murder of the tramp in the spinny; for if it is the same man I saw that night, I know who killed him!"

Her voice, low as it was, reached a figure that stood at the door which had swiftly and noiselessly opened to admit a man.

"I know who killed him!" The words fell like a thunder-bolt at his feet, and he looked keenly at the two women as he came forward.

"So," he thought, "Miss Agnes is playing the game of Paul Pry on her own! I wonder what she has got hold of? Any-

THE BOND BETWEEN.

way, her ladyship can be trusted to keep her own end up with that cat!"

After a few brief remarks Agnes left the room, and Lady Maitland sent a light laugh after her.

"Agnes has been entertaining me," she said. "She imagines that she has a clue to the murder in the spinny!"

Digby Scarlett eyed her curiously. Her cheeks were a pale pink, due to her recent encounter, but he fancied he could say something that would chase the colour from them.

"Agnes is clever," he said drily, "with the cleverness of a house tabby—it knows when to purr and when to scratch. By the way," he went on, "have you by any chance lost—anything?"

"Lost anything?" she repeated; "I fancy not. Why do you ask?"

"Because," and he took a step nearer, "because, in crossing the spinny the other night, I came upon a trinket. It was an oval-shaped locket of hammered gold, much stained—by—mud. I opened it, on one side there was no picture; on the other—one of a girl in her first youth. I thought it might belong to you?"

"No, no," she murmured, her teeth chattering as with sudden cold; "I have lost nothing of that nature; I hate lockets."

He smiled gently. "So I supposed. On the back of the photo I took out were two initials; they were 'M. from V.' But as it does not belong to you, I will take it to the police to-morrow—they may find it useful!"

He watched her narrowly, and saw her face blanch to a sickly grey, while her white, even teeth met over her red lips in an effort to keep back the scream that rose to them.

"I have not seen the girl Ivy," he went on carelessly. "It is time I paid my court to my future wife. I will make her a present of the locket!"

"Ah, you brute!" the desperate woman whispered; "why—why should I stoop to deny what you *think* you know? Supposing that locket were the property of the person you think—what then? I say, what then?"

"What then?" he repeated hoarsely; "why, your ladyship's life is in the hollow of my hand; one squeeze—and it is gone."

She laughed wildly. "Circumstantial evidence, Mr. Scarlett. What can that do, after all?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Deprive you of a great many things you love, Lady Maitland. Among others, your son Woolf!"

"May I see that locket?" she said calmly, forcing a smile to her lips; "then I can tell whether I have lost one like it or not."

He put his hand to his pocket and drew it out. "I usually keep it locked up, but to-day brought it with me."

With fingers that scarcely could hold the thing she had almost given her soul to possess again, she touched the spring and looked at the photo lying loosely in its place.

His eyes were on her, but as he turned to pick up a glove she quickly tore the picture out and flung it in the fire.

"You vixen!" he snarled, livid with rage; "I was a fool to trust you with it!"

He rushed to the grate, but she barred his way, once more a laughing, radiant woman.

"Outwitted again, Mr. Scarlett! The face you counted on is burnt to a cinder! Now take your locket, and go to the police—if you dare!"

TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Bird Takes Wing.

"GOOD-MORNING, Miss Mason; quite a Spring-like day, isn't it?" And Gilbert Chase caught up to the lanky figure of Miss Maitland's maid, who had been steadily tramping on ahead for some time.

She turned sharply to him, her long, narrow eyes greeting him with a brilliant flash. Mr. Chase had what the servants

at the Manor described as "a way with him." But strangely enough it was not the rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed Betsy, the under maid, nor the trim, dainty Parisienne Félice, her ladyship's special maid, that attracted the quiet-looking man with the rather weak eyes and diffident manner.

It was Mason, the bitter-tongued, sallow-faced woman with the weird eyes, that had a trick of suddenly flashing into your own when you least expected it, who had caught the masculine fancy of Mr. Chase. Perhaps it was not altogether fancy that actuated Mr. Chase's philandering, but, whatever his motive, it was never attributed to any other than her own surpassing beauty by the usually astute Mason.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Chase?" she said; "fancy meeting you here!"

"Yes; the unexpected always happens," he assented gravely. "Are you going to leave a message anywhere, or is this just a little stroll for the good of your health?"

"It's my afternoon out," she retorted; "I get it once a week, and every other Sunday."

"Ah; you have a good home, Miss Mason," he said, with a sigh. "I wish I had as good! A lovely house, and a beautiful mistress!"

Mason sniffed aggressively. "'Andsome is as 'andsome does is my motto," she replied; "and I'm not one as speaks without reason, too. I've my own opinion about her ladyship, and she's clever enough to pretend not to notice it; and I must say that she carries things off with a 'igh' and 'I'!"

"Humph!" thought Gilbert Chase, "so there's bad blood between them, is there? This jealous cat will be a mine of information to me, so long as I can get her on the right tack!"

Aloud he said:

"Oh, I suppose all big ladies are the same in their ways. They gets like that."

"Big ladies!" sneered Mason. "She may be now, but before she came to the Manor she was no one much; leastways, I've heard the housekeeper say she was a plain Mrs. Something, a widdler."

"Plain! Never!" murmured the detective, whose eye had been attracted by the radiant lady of the Manor. But it was his business instinct that prompted him to learn about everyone, whether they came within the range of his professional calling or not.

It was now nearly ten days since he had been quietly investigating the inquiry about the murder of the ex-convict in the spinny. At the inquest the verdict had been given as "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown"; and the evidence brought up regarding the shots had evolved the strange fact that the bullet the doctor had extracted from the head of the dead man was of the calibre .096, the same nature as that which had so nearly also killed the son and heir of Sir Trevor Maitland, both shots having evidently been fired from similar weapons.

But what had so puzzled the coroner and jury, as well as Gilbert Chase, had been a second bullet in the dead man's shoulder. It must have been fired before the fatal and last shot, as an after-death wound would not have closed up again.

The question that Gilbert Chase had asked himself ever since was, "Were there two people in the spinny that night both bent on murder?" for, if not, why was not the third shot similar in calibre to those which had brought both men down, one indeed, to his death; for the bullet in the dead man's arm had been of the calibre .032, obviously belonging to a much lighter weapon than which had killed Mike Holland.

"Two revolvers," Gilbert Chase had argued, "did not necessarily point to the presence of two people;" but until Jack Maitland was allowed to see him and throw some light on the mystery, he ferreted and dangled the bait of artful questioning among the different people with whom he came in contact.

"How is the young lady now?" he said abruptly to Mason, who had from time to time stolen thoughtful glances at him; "I mean," he corrected himself quickly, "the young lady who lives at the lodge?"

"Oh, her," said the woman in a mollified tone; "she's a bit pale and pecky-like, but there's not much the matter with her."

"She is very lovely," he went on slowly, "she reminds me of someone—or was it a picture?—that I saw years ago. I remember making that remark the first time I saw her ladyship. She has just the same type of face that haunts you. But returning to the young lady—Miss Strange, I think her name is; I suppose she was at the ball on the night of the murder?"

"The murder!" gasped the woman suddenly; "you mean the man—Mike—Mike Holland?" and her quivering face and dilated pupils showed that she was strangely upset by the subject.

Gilbert Chase looked at her sharply. A sudden thought that had sprung into being died as he glanced at her pale face, and noted her trembling lips. The black hair, growing low down on the forehead, the long, cunning dark eyes, and cruel, vicious mouth reminded him vaguely of another face he had but recently looked upon—the face of the dead ex-convict Mike Holland.

"You are startled!" he said innocently. "What was Mike Holland to you?"

She looked at him strangely, battling for self-control; then smiled a stiff, distorted grin that accentuated the terror in her eyes.

"Nothing," she said thickly. "But I think I saw him alive—in the village—once or twice. The mention of the man's name upset me. It came so sudden like!"

"I suppose," he went on carelessly, "that the poor wretch never spoke to you? These tramps often spin yarns about themselves."

The woman shook her head. "No, I only passed him in the village—we—we never spoke."

"I'm sorry," Gilbert Chase murmured. "You might have told me if he was married or not. I should like to know that. It is important—very!"

She flashed a strange look at him.

"I tell you we never spoke," she said shortly. "If you

want to ask those questions, you'd better go to—"

She stopped, and with a sudden change of manner, said: "The girl from the lodge can tell you more than I can, Mr. Chase, if you know how to open her mouth; and someone else's too!"

Outside the "New Age" he paused, and said, "Will you come in and have some refreshment? The inn will not be full or noisy, it's too early."

She hesitated, then accepted with a show of diffidence.

In the bar-parlour there were one or two people, a woman and a couple of men drinking. As Gilbert Chase and his companion seated themselves in one of the partitioned-off corners, she cast a hurried glance round, then uttered a low cry that drew all eyes upon her.

The woman standing by the bar turned also, and put out a thin, dirty hand impulsively.

"Why, it's Polly!" she murmured. "Polly, you're here! Then you can tell me all about pore old—"

With a hasty gesture Mary Mason rose to her feet. "I'm goin' out," she said. "I'm took bad!"

Gilbert Chase followed closely on her heels, his professional stent again on the trail. Fear—large, shrinking fear—was written in the woman's eyes. As she hurried away he looked after her thoughtfully. "Very well, 'Polly,'" he said, with a grim smile, "we will resume our chat later!"

He turned back into the "New Age," and cast a sharp glance round the bar.

The woman from whom Mason had shrunk had vanished.

"Your ladyship will pardon me, but I must insist upon seeing Miss Strange now. I will not keep her long, but it is natural to suppose that she had some reason for her emotion of the other day, and she must, in the cause of justice, tell me what she meant by saying the things she did."

It was a couple of hours after he had re-entered the "New Age" that Gilbert Chase had requested to see her ladyship

(Continued overleaf.)

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THE BOND BETWEEN.

at the Manor, and he was now in her boudoir, standing before her respectfully, yet firmly. A slight smile of amusement curved Lady Maitland's lips and deepened the violet of her eyes, as she said softly:

"And you really think, Mr. Chase, that that poor child will be able to assist you? Why do you so earnestly desire to speak to her? If I could only assure you of her utter inability to help you."

He bowed gravely, admiring the contour of her face and the creamy loveliness of her hands. The black velvet band that he had noticed before round one perfect wrist had gone, and he found himself wondering whether the donning of it had been a dainty woman's fancy, or whether it had concealed some more subtle motive. Then he pulled himself up with a start. He was actually attributing criminal reasons to the wife of the Chief Constable of Melton!

"I am sorry, your ladyship," he murmured; "but may I ask when it will be convenient to you for me to see Miss Strange? I can call later."

She shrugged her delicate shoulders carelessly. "She is lying down in a nice sleep, but if you will call at the Manor this evening about nine, I will see that she comes down to you. She is staying with us at present, not at the lodge."

He bowed again, feeling himself dismissed by the imperious woman whose beauty, like the perfume from a hothouse flower, overpowered him.

When he had gone, Lady Maitland quickly left her boudoir and went upstairs. Outside the door of one of the bedrooms she paused, and smiled grimly.

"He may call at nine and see her; but I fancy I shall know what she will say first!"

She pushed open the door and walked in. By the side of the bed Ivy was sitting. At the sight of the woman in the doorway she started to her feet, alternately paling and flushing.

"I have come to tell you," her ladyship said coldly, "that the detective is coming to speak to you to-night at nine about the insane words you dropped some time ago in his hearing. If you are not careful," she went on warningly, "you may incriminate someone you profess to love. I wish to impress upon you the necessity of being as reticent as you can, for your own sake—as well as for the sake of others!"

"A detective!" the girl murmured shrinkingly. "Oh, Lady Maitland! I can't see him—I can't! It is awful! He will know—he will find out. And then—and then——"

Her voice broke, and she flung herself down at the elder woman's feet in a tempest of fear.

"Keep me from him! Keep me from him!"

"You little fool!" Lady Maitland hissed. "Pull yourself together. Remember the dead man was—your—father! No one knows but you, and—I! It remains with yourself to bury the secret! Mr. Scarlett will forget it."

The girl drew her hand wearily across her brow. She was trembling, and the cold, icy face of the woman above her inspired her with awe and—dread. Oh, if only she had a mother to turn to—a mother into whose arms she could nestle, her heart would not be so sore.

She rose to her feet silently. And the sight of the ruffled hair on the girl's brow made her ladyship draw in her breath with a thrill.

"See!" she said, in a low voice, drawing the girl towards the dressing-table; "if you are in doubt as to your parentage—look! Have you never wondered at the significance of that mark on your forehead? Shall I tell you what it is? It is the brand of a felon! You are seared with the mark of your father's shame—a broad arrow!"

She flung the trembling girl from her with a scornful gesture.

"Now you know why I want you to be careful to-night! A false step on your part will perhaps be your ruin! Remember!"

She glided from the room, leaving the shame-stricken girl quivering with the burden of disgrace and ignominy that was too heavy to bear alone.

She pushed the soft hair back from her brow again, and felt with burning fingers the brand of shame with which she was doomed to go through life labelled.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet. Her eyes were flashing, and an artificial strength lent energy to her tired limbs.

"They shall never know!" she murmured, "never! Better that I should——" She paused, then shivered.

And the shadows grew darker in the little room where she waited for night to fall.

At nine punctually Gilbert Chase presented himself at the Manor. Lady Maitland received him with quiet dignity, then rang the bell and requested Lawson to inform Miss Strange that she was wanted.

Presently the man returned, looking startled.

"Please, your ladyship, Miss Strange is not in her room; but I saw a note on the table, which I have brought down."

Lady Maitland put out her hand, but the detective interposed quickly:

"Allow me!"

He opened it and read:

"I shall be gone from Melton when you read this. I could not face that man! Lies come strangely to my lips! I am for ever passing out of your lives. You will keep my secret!"

He handed it silently to her ladyship, who took and glanced hurriedly at the trembling words. She was glad that this had happened—that the girl had gone, and the smug-faced detective cheated as she had been.

"Well," she said quietly, concealing her satisfaction, "what can be done now, Mr. Chase? The girl has evidently run away terrified. Had we not better let her go?"

Gilbert Chase smiled grimly.

"I fancy not, your ladyship. I shall apply for a warrant for the arrest of Ivy Strange—if alive!"

Lady Maitland sprang to her feet with startling eyes.

"Arrest! What for?" she breathed hoarsely.

He answered her gravely:

"On suspicion of being guilty of, or the accessory after the fact to, the murder of Mike Holland in the spinny!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

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CORA: "Was it a love-match?" Mabel: "Well, as her money paid his debts, and kept him out of gaol, I should say it was rather a safety match."

She Might be Gone.

"HARRY, please don't whistle 'The Girl I left Behind Me.' " "Why not, Clara?" "You know we haven't any idea whether the servant will be there when we get back home or not."

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BILL: "They tried to get cinematograph pictures of the actress when she was writing a stage letter." Gill: "How did it turn out?" "Failure! She wrote too fast for the machine to follow her."

Poor Pickings.

CARRIE NEWS: "Have you noticed the change that's come over Mr. Dudell lately? Something has been preying on his mind for the last two weeks." May Cutting: "It surely must be starved by this time, whatever it is."

An Easy Remedy.

"THEY say that Nell Gadleigh has broken off her engagement with Harry Hippleson." "Yea, she says he was so affectionate that he wearied her." "Oh! if that was all, why didn't she just marry him and have done with the wearisome part of it?"

Circumstances Alter Cases.

HUSBAND: "What was that you were playing, my dear?" Wife: "Did you like it?" "It was lovely!—the melody divine, the harmony exquisite!" "It is the very thing I played last evening, and you said it was horrid." "Well, the steak was burnt last evening."

What's Bred in the Bone.

"So you think there really is something in heredity, after all?" "I do. Young Mundsley, who is trying to get up a North Pole expedition, is the son of a woman who used to be an inveterate house-hunter, not because she could have used a house if she had found one, but for the mere love of the thing."

Hard to Convince.

THE other morning Mrs. Blank was talking to her husband. "I noticed in *The Daily Hoodoo* that Mr. Blifkins died on Sunday." "It's a mistake, my dear," replied the husband; "he died on Monday." "But the paper said Sunday." "I know it, but it was an error in the print." "I thought so, too, at first, but I got a half-dozen copies of the paper, and it was the same in all of them. They certainly couldn't have made the same mistake over and over again." The husband tried to convince her, but it was no use, and he gave it up.

What Might be Expected.

GLADYS: "Isn't it odd that the honeymoon should last but a month?" Rich: "Not so very odd; bills are sent out monthly, you know."

Didn't Want Another.

"No," said Miss Elder, kindly but firmly, "I cannot marry you, but I'll be a——" "Thanks, Miss Elder," interrupted the rejected one spitefully, "but I have two grandmothers."

She'd Drawn Her Conclusions.

HE: "I can't get away from my business. I'm wedded to it." She: "I always thought the things that men were wedded to were the very things they seemed to get away from the most."

Sale Made at Once.

"ARE those shoes your best quality?" "We have only one quality, madam." "Then why the difference in price? A friend of mine paid 22s. yesterday, and these are only 18s." "We sell by quantity, madam." Quick sale.

Not a Society Person.

MRS. NEXDOOR: "I have found out one thing about that Mrs. Newcomer. Whoever she is, she has never moved in good society." Mr. Nexdoor: "How do you know that?" Mrs. Nexdoor: "She shakes hands as if she meant it."

A Word of Warning.

"HENRIETTA, dear!" "Yes, ma," from the daughter at the door, parting from her sweetheart, who is just kissing her good-night. "Tell George to look out for the paint." George does not kiss her again. Henrietta thinks it is awfully mean of her mother to give her away, until she remembers that the front gate has been just newly-painted.

It Couldn't be Done.

"It doesn't seem possible." "What's that, my dear?" "Why, Mr. Atkinson, the statistician, says that all the people in the world could stand in a field ten miles square." "Well, they couldn't." "But, hubby, Mr. Atkinson says so." "I don't care if he does. You don't suppose a woman could stand in a crowd like that, do you?" "Why not?" "Because nobody could see her clothes."

The Price of Tears.

A NUMBER of married men were recently dining together in a club house. The question was asked, "What trait in your wife do you consider the most expensive one?" The answers were as numerous as the men in the party. With one it was vanity, another religion, or charity, or love of dress. The last man to whom the question was put answered oracularly: "Her tears." There was a sudden burst of assent from every man in the party.

Men Require Catching.

SHE: "This is an awfully long play. The hero does not marry the heroine until the close of the fifth act. Five acts are too many." He: "But you forget that this is a modern love story, and the scene is laid in the present day. An author must make his play natural and true to life. Formerly love plays were quite short; but nowadays the men are so shy, from being hunted so much, that it takes the most attractive woman a long time to run a man down and capture him."

Too Enthusiastic.

"TEACHING to me," said the enthusiastic young school-mistress, "is a holy calling. To sow in the young mind the seeds of future knowledge and watch them as they grow and develop is a pleasure greater than I can tell. I never weary of my work. I think only of——" "I am very sorry," interrupted the young man to whom she was talking, "that you are so devoted to your profession, Miss Clara. I had hoped that some day I might have asked—in fact I called to-night to—but I hardly dare go on in the light of what you have just been saying." "You may go on, Mr. Smith," said the young lady softly. "I am a little too enthusiastic at times, perhaps."



Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette.

All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.]

A Strong Bond.

"F. G. A."—I regret I have not May's address, so cannot tell you whether or not she is the same girl. However, if the answer I gave to her meets the case of yourself and your beloved I am very pleased. Naturally the same questions must occur in dozens of different cases, and the same advice can be taken by all. So to you I say, if you have been intimate with a girl for three years there must be some bond strong enough to inspire hopes of love in future.

A Word on Shoelaces.

"Would it be proper for a girl to allow a young man to tie her shoelaces for her when she has only spoken to him once or twice?" asks THISTLE.

There's no reason why he should not perform such an act of courtesy. It is not a matter of the length of your acquaintance. But don't tie your shoes too loosely when walking about with young men you only know very slightly.

Not a Matrimonial Agency.

"DULL" wants to meet a young lady upon whom he could bestow his affections. He is a stranger in London, twenty-three, fairly tall, and in a good permanent position.

I cannot agree, "DULL," to your suggestion that I should be the means of introducing you to any lady readers. As I have often said, this page is for advice, and not any kind of agency. My advice to you is to live in as select a neighbourhood as your means allow, and by joining in local church work, amateur theatricals, tennis clubs, or musical gatherings, get yourself into the society of those women amongst whom you are likely to meet the one you seek. Nobody need really be "dull" in London if they only go the right way to work to make good friends.

The Age for Independence.

UNTIL what age should a girl obey her parents in her choice of a sweetheart? For instance, "CECILIA" is deeply in love with a young man to whom her parents have taken objection. "CECILIA" is seventeen, and wishes to know if she is old enough to stick to the young man, whether or not her parents approve of him.

"CECILIA" is certainly too young to disobey her parents in such a matter. They must be very much better judges as to a young man's suitability for her than she herself, and no doubt they have very excellent reasons for objecting to him. My advice is that "CECILIA" should do as her parents tell her about breaking off the engagement. Had she been, say, four years older, she might claim to use her own judgment in the matter.

Respect versus Love.

"J. A. R."—No, I do not think the case you refer to is the same as your own. But the answer will apply in your case. You say you respect and like the older man more than anybody else you know, and that your relationship with the younger has never developed into love.

Well, if you can definitely say you like and respect a man, that is almost strong enough ground on which to listen to his proposal, especially as the man to whom you refer seems devoted to you, and to be a gentleman in the highest sense. If you really like and admire him, depend on it in years to come the sentiment will mature into something deeper.

Getting a Proposal.

"EDITH" knows that her young man loves her, but though they have been walking out together for several years, he has never told her so. Her friends say it is about time they were engaged. Should she tell him this, or should she let him know by strategy?

He is evidently very nervous and reserved. Perhaps you had better leave the matter of speaking to him to your parents or guardian. He must confess something to them, and they are usually more skilful in the matter of extracting such things than a girl herself. Naturally you wish the matter to be settled. Strategy is dangerous, unless very skilful. I know of a girl who brought about a proposal by the simple device of flirting with others. I do not recommend this, though in some cases it has been very successful.

An Indifferent Lover.

"U. L." suspects her young man of being tired of her. They have been together for two years and a half, but lately he has grown very different in his manner. When asked the reason he told "U. L." that "he thought they saw too much of each other." "U. L." says they meet twice, at dinner-time and tea-time, and every night regularly. He lodges next door. How can "U. L." alter his attitude?

Well, "U. L.," it is quite possible for young lovers to see each other too often. A man ought to have certain intervals in which to see his friends or take exercise, and naturally he does chafe a little if always in his sweetheart's company. Why not suggest that he should transfer his lodgings for awhile to some other district? No doubt he is very fond of you, and after a week or so of absence would probably return to you fonder than ever. I have known such little absences work wonders in restoring jaded lovers to a proper state of warmth.

Choosing Between Two Girls.

"A YOUNG man knows two girls. From their manner he believes both are in love with him. One is bright and sparkling, the other sedate and fond of home life. He cannot decide which to marry. What is he to do?"

My correspondent had better leave off meeting the girls altogether. If possible, let him pay distinct attentions to one or other of them without committing himself to a proposal, and if he finds that he is growing in love with her, let him stick to her. Most men would select the bright, sparkling girl in preference. I do not know my correspondent's own temperament, so cannot say what is the case with him.

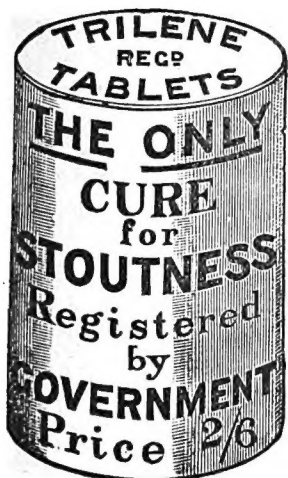
Usually the best marriages are between those who are opposite in the matter of "brightness and frivolity." Two of that kind are very likely to clash. A serious man is well suited in "a bright, sparkling wife," and a "bright, sparkling man" generally requires a sedate, home-loving wife to see that his vivacity does not lead him astray.

Cynthia

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

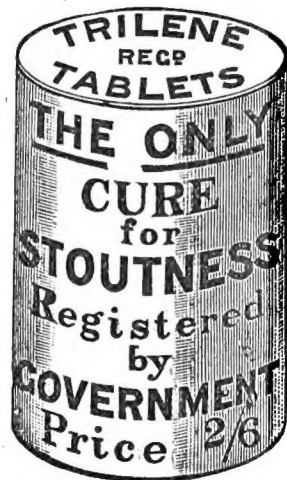
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely **REDUCE WEIGHT** and **CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY**, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to improve both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**
66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"St Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 15th, 1898.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SEKENBORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says "I weighed 12st. 5lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 5lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

Mr. Wm. Usher says: "A sister of mine, who was 12st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Cliford Street, South Wigton, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44 Calais, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 5lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENAUD, of Liatorp, Sweden, writes, 8th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure."

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 5lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. FRANCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell, writes: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. BOLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 33 inches. I hope soon to be 32. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LICHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 11st. 5lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Miss JANE CARTER, of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value. I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 57 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 4½lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois, writes: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

"No Better Food."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., etc.



Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., etc., *lecturing on Foods, says:*
"The chief text in the Gospel of Nutrition is that Tea and Coffee are not Foods at all, while Cocoa is an admirable and sustaining diet. Than **FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED COCOA**, no better food product of this nature can be obtained or used."